

17985

AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

A Collection

OF THE

MOST INSTRUCTIVE AND AMUSING

LIVES

EVER PUBLISHED,

WRITTEN BY THE PARTIES THEMSELVES.

**WITH BRIEF INTRODUCTIONS, AND COMPENDIOUS
SEQUELS CARRYING ON THE NARRATIVE TO THE
DEATH OF EACH WRITER.**

VOL. XIII.—JAMES HARDY VAUX.

LONDON

WHITTAKER, TREACHER, AND ARNOT

AVE-MARIA-LANE.

MCCCXXX.

MEMOIRS
OF
JAMES HARDY VAUX,

A SWINDLER AND THIEF,

**NOW TRANSPORTED TO NEW SOUTH WALES FOR THE SECOND
TIME, AND FOR LIFE.**

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:
WHITTAKER, TREACHER, AND ARNOT,
AVE-MARIA-LANE.

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INTRODUCTION.

[THE following judicious editorial notice, prefixed to the first edition of these *Memoirs*—in 1819—renders superfluous any further remark upon the nature of the work. The absence of a Sequel, the addition of which to each life forms a part of the plan of “Autobiography,” is sufficiently explained by the motto from *Don Quixote*.]

It has been thought that the Public would benefit, in more ways than one, by the publication of a work, in which the philosopher may read the workings of an unprincipled conscience, the legislator be let into the operations of the laws upon the criminal’s mind, and the citizen derive a key to the frauds by which he is so easily and constantly beset; and it is not often that thieves are possessed of sufficient truth, memory, vanity, and literature, to tell the story of their own lives. It will be seen that Mr Vaux, to-

gether with an excellent memory, possesses a good share of vanity, and sufficient literature. In the following pages, the former, I think, often magnifies the latter, particularly in the account of the author's readership at the printing-office; but it is only justice to him to say, that I have found occasion to make very few alterations in his manuscript, which came to my hands ready prefaced and dedicated, and chaptered, as if ripe for his old master's printing-office; that it was exceedingly well and fairly transcribed; and, with one or two exceptions, correctly spelled and punctuated.

When Mr Vaux's predilection for low company comes to be observed, the reader will justly doubt the great liberality of education and taste for reading, upon which he so often vaunts himself. The quotations in his narrative are all common-place; and I have struck out a few as profaned by misapplication.

As for the truth of the following tale—nobody can vouch for it. I am afraid it is occasionally sacrificed at the shrine of Vanity, who seems to be the author's patron-saint. He is fonder of confessing himself guilty of frauds, from the punishment of which he escaped, than of those in which he was found out; detection (he thinks)

impeaches his cunning ; and though he recounts with exultation the theft for which he is now transported for life, that is because he knows it was committed under protection of perhaps the most consummate address and assurance ever exhibited by man ; it amounted to the sublime of impudence—and, after all, he was only betrayed into the hands of justice, who, if she had a hundred eyes, would not (it should seem) have enough to detect the dissimulations of James Hardy Vaux. The reader will observe, that he denies his guilt of the crime for which he was before transported, because it was a common clumsy partnership picking of a handkerchief out of the pocket ; and so, too, he denies any confederacy with the judge-advocate's servant in robbing his master's writing-desk, for which offence he was further transported to Newcastle in this territory, whither he now again is sent for life, for an attempt to escape from the country altogether. The reader must, therefore, believe as much or little as he pleases of the following story. Of him who confesses himself a liar, the voice must necessarily be listened to with distrust.

“ Look to him well ; have a quick eye to see ;
“ He has deceiv'd another, and may thee.”

By the laws of all nations, he who is once detected in perjury is not allowed to bear further witness; the testimony of a king's evidence must be corroborated; and the confession of a felon is never allowed to prove anything against another person.

With this *caveat lector*, I dismiss this entertaining and instructive narrative; for so I will call it, thinking it as full of cunning and adventure as "The Life of Guzman d'Alfarache, the Spanish Rogue," if not so profoundly moralized. The religion indeed (if it can be so called) of Mr Vaux is, like that of most convicts, a low sort of fatalism, which may be called *a fatalism after the fact*. The followers of this sect do not connect predestination with "foreknowledge absolute," but merely comfort themselves with the truism, that when their *misfortunes* have happened, nothing can prevent them from having happened. Of "free will," they first suffer the time for the exercise to go by, and then complain of the impotency,—abandoning themselves, with an insensibility which they mistake for resignation, to what they call the predestined and inevitable decrees of "fixed fate.*"

* "Le bien, nous le faisons; le mal, c'est le sort;
" Or a toujours raison, le destin toujours tort."

Some of this false complaining has been expunged from the following work; but enough (I am afraid) is left to shew the delusion.

It remains only to be added, that the pecuniary profits of this publication will be applied to the relief of the author in his perpetual banishment.

B. F.

dney, New South Wales,
18th May 1817.

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PREFACE.

BEFORE I commence this narrative of a life marked with more than common vicissitudes, I beg to bespeak the reader's attention to a few cursory remarks. I must first premise, that I have undertaken the task in obedience to the commands of a gentleman, who is pleased to anticipate a sufficient fund of entertainment in the perusal to compensate for the honour he confers in noticing an outcast of fortune like myself; who, partly from my own vicious conduct, and partly perhaps from the malignity of my fate, have forfeited all hope of attaining that respectable rank in society to which, in the happy days of youthful innocence, I had every reason to look forward with confidence.

But now, alas! although I have too late seen my errors, and my intentions are strictly virtuous, I have nothing to expect, but to continue through the remainder of this transitory life,

such as I am at the present moment—an unhappy exile, for ever banished from my country and relations, and rendered incapable of making the smallest reparation to the community I have injured, by the exercise of those talents which nature has bestowed, and the best of friends have so liberally cultivated. Nor do I fear being accused of vanity, in asserting, that they are above mediocrity, since it is not to myself I am indebted for them; and the greater infamy attaches to me for their perversion,—for where much is given much is required.

To return to the remark I set out with: these sheets not being intended at first for the press, or to meet the public eye, I have not laboured their composition. Indeed, the work being executed in haste, and under many local disadvantages, I have had little time for study, and can only boast of a scrupulous attention to truth, to which I have been enjoined by my employer.

Where my conduct has been such as I now blush at, I have “nothing extenuated;” nor have I, on the other hand, used the smallest embellishments to advance myself in the good opinion of my readers. With me, in all human probability, the die is cast; and as the prejudices of those persons, who alone can extricate me

from misery, are not likely to be removed by any professions of amendment I can make, my only hopes of happiness are centered in a better world, where we are instructed that there is much joy over one single repentant sinner.

JAMES HARDY VAUX.

Newcastle, New South Wales,
17th September 1815.

DEDICATION.

TO THOMAS THOMPSON, ESQ.

CAPTAIN IN HIS MAJESTY'S 46TH REGIMENT,
COMMANDANT OF NEWCASTLE, IN THE
COLONY OF NEW SOUTH WALES, AND ONE
OF HIS MAJESTY'S JUSTICES OF THE PEACE
FOR THAT TERRITORY.

SIR,

HAVING, in obedience to your commands, completed the following narrative of my adventures, I should deem myself wanting in gratitude, were I to omit offering, at the same time that I respectfully submit my production to your perusal, the humble tribute of my thanks, for the many favours I have received at your hands; for the indulgent treatment I have generally experienced; and more particularly for the distinguished honour you have conferred on so unworthy an object as myself, in condescending to feel an interest

in the occurrences of my former life, and in permitting me to inscribe to you the following Memoirs of it.

I beg to assure you, sir, that however fate or fortune may hereafter dispose of me, the remembrance of your goodness will never be effaced from my mind; and that in the event of my past sufferings inducing you to use your bountiful influence in my behalf, and to procure me once more the probable means of attaining a respectable rank in society, my future conduct shall be such, as to prove that you have not erred in believing me radically reformed, and deserving the honour of your patronage.

In the sincere hope that these sheets will contribute to your entertainment, and that of such friends as you may be pleased to communicate them to,

I have the honour to subscribe myself,

With the most dutiful respect,

Sir,

Your obliged and grateful

Humble servant,

JAMES H. VAUX.

Newcastle,

30th March 1816.

MEMOIRS
OF
JAMES HARDY VAUX.

"I am Gines de Passamonte: I am not ashamed of my name. As for my life and conversation, there's an account of 'em in black and white, written with this numerical hand of mine."

"There he tells you true," said the officer; "for he has written his own history himself, without omitting a tittle of his roguish pranks."

"Then it must be an extraordinary piece," cried Don Quixote.

"So extraordinary," replied Gines, "that it far outdoes not only Lazarillo de Tormes but whatever has been and shall be written in that kind. For mine's true, every word; and no invented stories can compare with it for variety of tricks and accidents."

"What's the title of the book?" asked Don Quixote.

"The Life of Gines de Passamonte," answered the other.

"Is it quite finished?" asked the knight.

"How the devil can it be finished, and I yet living?" replied the slave. "There's in it every material point from my cradle to this my last going to the gallies."

"Then it seems you have been there before," said Don Quixote.

"To serve God and the king, I was some four years there once before," replied Gines.

DON QUIXOTE.

MEMOIRS

OF

JAMES HARDY VAUX.

CHAPTER I.

SOME ACCOUNT OF MY FAMILY. MY BIRTH AND
SUBSEQUENT ADVENTURES UNTIL I ATTAINED MY
NINTH YEAR

It may be expected that, like other biographers, I should give some account of my ancestors. This I can but imperfectly do ; for the volatility of my disposition, and the early age at which I left my friends, prevented me from ever making pointed inquiries on the subject. Family pride I have ever considered as the most ridiculous of all human weaknesses. However, as I am writing facts, be it known, that my progenitors, by my mother's side, were of no mean rank ; my great-great-grandmother, Dorothy, the daughter of sir Thomas Hartopp, bart. of Ragby, or Ragley Castle, in ——shire, was united, after a long and romantic courtship, to a gentleman named Yonge, and from this union sprang a very respectable family, the Yongs of ——shire, who are still of some consequence in that county. This scrap of genealogy I should probably have been unacquainted with, but for the circumstance of two original love-letters, interchanged between the parties above mentioned, during

the period of their courtship, and still preserved in the family as antiques. These epistles are written in the most pathetic strain, and, allowing for the age in which they were composed, abound in elegant diction. My grandmother, Dorothy Yonge, married Mr Lowe, a respectable attorney of the court of King's Bench, who for many years filled the office of clerk to the warden of the Fleet, and had besides a very extensive private practice. The only issue of this marriage was my mother, who was brought up with the most affectionate tenderness, and well educated. By what means she became acquainted with my father, who was from a very distant county, I never learnt; but she was united to him in the year 1781, and, as I have reason to think, against the advice and will of her parents, my father being of a family much less respectable, and at the time of his marriage in no higher situation than that of butler and house-steward to Mr Sumner, a member of parliament, whose estate was situated near Guildford, in Surrey; where my mother, it appears, went to reside after her union, of which I was the first fruits, being born at the village of East Clandon, on the 20th of May 1782. My father shortly afterwards quitted the family of Mr Sumner, and obtained a similar post in the service of sir Richard Hill, bart. with whom he continued several years.

In the year 1785, my grandfather, being advanced in life and naturally fond of retirement, quitted the profession to which, by his integrity and honour, he had long been an ornament; and prevailing on my parents to commit me to his care, removed with my grandmother to S—— in S——shire, I being then about three years of age. In this neat little town, surrounded by the relatives of my grandmother, and many friends of his own, my grandfather having served his clerkship in the county, this worthy and truly virtuous couple enjoyed for several years uninterrupted happiness, their only care being centered

in the education and indulgence of their grandson, of whom they every day became more extravagantly fond.

As my years increased, I was transferred from the preparatory school, at which I had been first placed, to a respectable seminary in the town, one of the best the county afforded, where I received the rudiments of a general education, and my capacity for learning endeared me still more to my indulgent friends. The imprudence of my mother's conduct had much lessened her in the affectionate esteem of her parents; nor did her subsequent behaviour, I believe, tend to restore her, or recommend my father to their good opinion; so that their correspondence grew every year less frequent, and at length settled in a formal coldness on both sides. What may appear more unnatural, though not uncommon, is that in proportion as the kindness and liberality of my grand-parents towards me increased, the affection of my father and mother diminished; and, as they had several children afterwards, I soon became an object, if not of aversion, at least of indifference. Of these children, two brothers and a sister died in their infancy, and two sisters younger than myself are still living.

Nothing worth record occurred during my continuance in S——shire. I passed my hours of relaxation, like other children, in harmless sports, but attended with avidity to my lessons when at school; and indeed, as soon as I was capable of understanding, my chief delight was in reading books of an entertaining nature, from all of which I derived more or less instruction. I even preferred this rational amusement to the childish games of my young companions, from which my good friends prognosticated that I should become a great man. I must confess that I was already a spoiled child; but I did not abuse the indulgence I met with, by any irregular or vicious conduct, nor did I betray any symptoms of latent depravity, or indicate

any wicked propensities. I hope my readers will believe this assertion when I relate by what gradations I fell from the path of rectitude, and when I account for the causes which actuated me to pursue a course of dishonesty. My principal delight when very young was to frequent the only bookseller's shop our little town afforded, where I would stand for hours reading, or rather devouring, whatever books, or as my dear grandfather termed it, mental food, I could lay hold of. There was also an old woman who had a circulating library, consisting of about a hundred volumes, chiefly novels, to whom I disbursed every sixpence and shilling I received for pocket money. My parents, indeed (for by this term I shall in future, for brevity's sake, call my grandfather and grandmother, as it is from them only I ever experienced parental affection they, I say) did not wholly approve of this indiscriminate passion for reading; fearing, and indeed with reason, as I am now convinced, that I should meet with matter tending to vitiate a young mind, (which has been justly compared to a sheet of white paper, open to receive and retain the first impressions) and to inculcate romantic notions of men and manners. Though I subscribe to the justice of this idea in general, yet I firmly believe it was owing to this course of reading that I very early acquired a knowledge of the world, surprising in one so young; and that when I soon after launched into the ocean of life I was on my guard against many of the deceptions of the designing part of mankind, and enabled to avoid or defeat them. My beloved parents, indeed, suspected not the errors to which I was becoming daily a stronger proselyte. My grandfather, whom I believe to have been as perfect a character and as good a Christian as nature ever formed, inculcated both by precept and example, the love and practice of piety and virtue; and above all, an inflexible adherence to honesty. He possessed many peculiarities of habit as

well as principle, several of which I inherit from him ;
--would to heaven I inherited his virtues !

My volatile disposition was early manifested by my want of stability or steady application to any particular employment or pursuit. Like Robinson Crusoe, I felt a strong predilection for rambling into foreign countries, and had a longing desire to go to sea. This arose from perusing the voyages of Cooke, Anson, and other circumnavigators. So enraptured was I with their profession, that before I was twelve years old I had a pretty just notion of nautical manœuvres, without having ever seen a ship, and had most sea-terms at my tongue's end. This rising inclination was, however, checked for a time by the dissuasions of my friends, who were alarmed at the bare thought of it, and by the inland situation of the county we resided in. Among my domestic amusements I practised drawing, for which I had a good natural genius ; but happening to be furnished with some prints of running horses for imitation, and being a great admirer of that noble animal, I suddenly turned my whole attention to this subject, in which I soon became a pretty good proficient, considering my youth and that I never had any master, and it appears to have been my *forte*. These prints having always the pedigree and performances of the animal subjoined, insensibly gave me a passion for racing, which became my next hobby-horse. I now eagerly perused the ' Racing Calendar,' took in the ' Sporting Magazine,' purchased a ' Stud-Book ;' * and was so indefatigable in my researches, that before I was fourteen I could repeat the pedigree of any celebrated horse, and could discourse of handicaps, and give-and-take plates, of the Beacon Course, and the Devil's Ditch, † with the fluency of a veteran jockey ; and I actually stole a march from London to Newmarket in hopes of obtaining a situation in the racing

* A genealogical account of race-horses.

† Two celebrated spots on Newmarket heath.

stables; flattering myself that I might, like the great Dennis O'Kelly,* whose life I had read, become in time a shining character on the turf; but I failed in this attempt to disgrace my friends and degrade myself, as my youth and genteel appearance deterred the person to whom I applied from listening to my request.

I shall now resume the thread of my narrative. After six years' residence at S——, my grandfather was prevailed on, by the solicitations of my father and mother, to return to London, and reside with them. My father, from whom I probably derived my disposition to instability, had by this time quitted the service of sir Richard Hill, and established himself in the hat and hosiery business in Great Turnstile, Holborn. How this chimerical project occurred to him, I know not, as he certainly had been bred to no trade; however, he was sanguine in his hopes of success. He had taken a good house and shop, and on our arrival in town, we found the family very comfortably established. I was introduced to my surviving sisters, who were pretty, lively girls, and my father and mother received me with a show of great affection.

I was now turned of nine years old, and shortly after our arrival was placed by my grandfather at a respectable boarding-school at Stockwell, in Surrey, and my sisters were soon afterwards settled by their father at one equally genteel at Oakingham, in Berkshire. As I shall not have occasion to say much more of these girls, I shall now briefly observe that they received a good female education, learning French and the other fashionable accomplishments of the age. Their capacities were good; they were both more than agreeable in their persons, and their dispositions uncommonly sweet.

* Proprietor of the celebrated horse Eclipse

CHAPTER II.

I AM TAKEN FROM SCHOOL AND RETURN TO MY GRAND-PARENTS. REMOVE TO CAMBRIDGESHIRE. FROM THENCE AGAIN TO LONDON. AND A SECOND TIME TO S——SHIRE. DIFFERENT PLANS PROPOSED FOR MY SETTLEMENT IN LIFE. FRIENDSHIP OF THE MOULTRIE FAMILY. AM SENT TO LIVERPOOL ON LIKING.

I CONTINUED at Stockwell nearly three years, during which time I acquired a tolerable knowledge of the classics, and became as perfect in the French language as I could do without residing in France. It was a custom at this school to allow no English being spoken, except in the hours devoted to instruction, by which means our progress in French was much facilitated. The scholars had free access to a well-selected library, by which means I gratified my passion for reading, which increased with my years. I was particularly fond of plays, and fancying I possessed some talents for the stage, I actually formed the design, in conjunction with a youth of good family, to elope from the school and join a company of strollers, with the manager of whom he had formed an acquaintance in London; but this hopeful scheme was frustrated by the young gentleman's sudden removal to the University. I was now taken from school, the excessive fondness of my dear parents not being able to brook a longer separation from me. I found these kind benefactors in private lodgings, they having quitted my father's house on account of family disagreements. The latter had relinquished the hat business, by which he was *minus* some hundred pounds; and after a short lapse of time he embarked in a very different trade, that of a tallow-chandler, of which he had con-

ceived favourable ideas: in this too he failed of success, and was equally unfortunate in several subsequent speculations, by which means he considerably impoverished himself; however, he continued to maintain appearances with tolerable credit until his decease. I shall now take leave of my father, mother, and sisters, for the present, their history having no farther connection with my own life, as I never again became an inmate of their family.

After a short residence in ——— square, my grandfather, on account of his wife's declining health, and with a view to economy in house-keeping, that he might be more liberal in his bounty to myself, thought fit to remove to Wisbeach in Cambridgeshire, where an old schoolfellow of his resided, who had strongly pressed this measure. Here he took a neat little house ready furnished, and placed me under the tuition of a clergyman in the town, whose school I attended daily.

At the end of twelve months, we again returned to London, and soon afterwards removed once more to S——shire, in the fourteenth year of my age.

I was most affectionately received by all my relations, and it was now considered time to consult upon my future disposal. My kind grandfather, who had been at so much care and expense in my education, had always intended me for one of the liberal professions, and, as was most natural, he would have preferred his own. I had a great uncle who had been a very eminent surgeon and apothecary, in which business he was succeeded by his son, who is still living in credit at S———. It was in contemplation to have me articled to this gentleman, but I wished for a more active employment, and should have preferred the army or navy. The dangers attending these honourable professions were however insuperable bars to the consent of my fond parents.

At this juncture a most advantageous and unexpected offer of patronage was extended in my behalf,

which, but for my unaccountable obstinacy, would have been thankfully embraced; but my evil genius rendered abortive a design which bade fair to procure me an honourable rank in society. The case was as follows: Within a mile of our little town resided John Moultrie, esq., whose father was governor of a British settlement in North America, and of whose name frequent mention is made in the history of the ill-fated war with that country. By his attachment to the cause of loyalty, this gentleman, as well as his son, suffered considerable losses in their private property, for which, in common with many others, governor Moultrie on his return to England received a liberal pecuniary compensation from ministers. The old gentleman was at this period lately deceased, and his son John succeeded to a large fortune, and a fine estate and mansion-house called Aston, which his father had purchased in the situation above described. He had married a very beautiful and accomplished woman, born in America, by whom he had an only son about my own age, who was like myself the darling of his parents. This youth (named Austin) had been my early schoolfellow and playmate; and the Moultrie family being in the habit of exchanging visits with most of the respectable inhabitants of S———, among which class my relations were numbered, I became known to them. As they perceived a growing attachment between myself and the young Austin, and my manners pleased them, my visits were encouraged, and I was almost a constant guest at Aston Hall. By the circle of genteel persons of both sexes with whom I there associated, my address was improved as well as my understanding. Young Moultrie and myself became inseparable; we were constant companions in the chase and other rural sports; and when the weather was unfavourable Mrs Moultrie took delight in hearing me read her favourite authors, to which she obliged her son to attend; and as I had

rather the advantage in mental acquirements, she was pleased to say that I contributed to his improvement. In a word, I may truly assert that the happiest moments of my life were spent in this amiable family.

At the period of which I am now writing, the parents of my young friend had determined on settling him at the University of Oxford, in order to complete his education: and the regret they felt at parting with their beloved child was scarcely more poignant than that of the latter at his approaching separation from me, so ardent was our juvenile friendship. In this state of affairs, his father, knowing my situation and the circumstances of my grandfather, who by his liberality towards me had much impaired his private fortune, which consisted at his retirement, of but a few thousand pounds stock in the three per cent. consols, a considerable part of which he had sold out at a very disadvantageous rate, by reason of the great depression in stocks at the commencement of the French war: knowing all this, and that my settlement in life was at this moment the subject of much perplexity, Mr Moultrie, with a most unparalleled generosity, offered to place me at college on the same terms with his son, and at the end of three years, if he then withdrew the latter, to take upon himself the charge of my future fortune. Here was an offer from a gentleman of 2,000*l.* a year! I have always been of Shakspeare's opinion, that "There is a tide in the affairs of men," &c., and that most men have not only one, but several opportunities of attaining honour and prosperity. I know this has been my own case, but my ill destiny has hitherto rendered such chances unavailing. I have unhappily neglected to "take the current while it served." So, in the present instance, having foolishly conceived, that to be immured within the walls of a college for several years would deprive me for so long a time of the gratifications I expected, both of mind and body, on

making my *débüt* on the stage of life, when I should be released from the constraint of parental authority ; the idea of losing so much valuable time, which I fancied I could employ to much more advantage, induced me to protest in strong terms against the measure proposed ; and my too indulgent parents at last gave way to my puerile remonstrances, and declined with the best grace they could the kindness intended me. This inpolitic step was much censured by my other relations, particularly two maiden aunts, from whom I had great pecuniary expectations ; however it was soon after consented to by all parties that I should be sent on trial, or as it is called on liking, to a respectable mercantile concern at Liverpool. The parties were Messrs Swan and Parker, very eminent linen-drapers, who besides an extensive retail trade, exported very largely to the East and West Indies, &c. A cousin of mine had been placed with these gentlemen a few years before, but from ill-health was obliged to return to his friends at S———. His father, the junior Mr Yonge I have before mentioned, had paid one hundred guineas with him as a premium ; and as the young man's indisposition prevented him from reaping the benefit of his engagement, Messrs Swan and Parker very handsomely consented to take me as an apprentice without any fee, by way of remuneration to the family. My grandfather indeed did not much relish the idea of a yard and a pair of scissors ; he had fondly hoped to see me profit by the education I had received, in a very different line of life ; but as I seconded the general wish of my friends on this occasion, and much time had been already lost in deliberation, all opposition ceased ; and I accordingly set out, well equipped with all necessaries, by the stage coach for Liverpool, where, on my arrival, I was kindly received by my new masters ; and the next day instructed in the nature of my duty, and the economy and rules of

the house. Having now brought the reader to an epoch in my life which promised considerable advantage to my future prospects, I shall put an end to the second chapter.

CHAPTER III.

MY EMPLOYMENT IN MY NEW SITUATION. SEDUCED BY AN APPRENTICE IN THE HOUSE TO NEGLECT MY BUSINESS, AND KEEP IRREGULAR HOURS. BECOME A FREQUENTER OF THE COCKPIT. REPEATED LOSSES AT THIS PLACE INDUCE ME TO RECRUIT MY FINANCES BY EMBEZZLING MY EMPLOYERS' MONEY. REMONSTRANCES ON MY MISCONDUCT PRODUCING NO EFFECT, AM SERIOUSLY ADMONISHED, AND SENT BACK TO MY FRIENDS.

I WAS now turned of fourteen; my health and constitution good, my spirits elevated, and I felt all those pleasing sensations which naturally arise in a youthful mind, happy in conscious innocence, and flattered by the prospect of rising to honourable independence. The gaiety and bustle of this beautiful and improving borough at once charmed and amused me; I spent a week in viewing the public buildings, the environs, &c.; but above all, my admiration was excited by the numerous and capacious docks, by which ships of large burden are admitted, as it were, into the heart of the town, and discharge their rich and varied cargoes with surprising facility, which are deposited in spacious warehouses, of amazing extent, and from twelve to fourteen stories high, with which these noble docks are nearly surrounded.

The opportunities I had, during my residence in Liverpool, of viewing the daily arrivals and sailings of merchant-ships to and from all parts of the world.

particularly the Guineamen, which formed a remarkably fine class of vessels,* revived the latent desire I had for a sea-faring life; and I wanted but little incitement, had the smallest opportunity offered, to take French leave of my masters, and gratify my rambling propensity. However, the bustle in which I was continually involved, and the new scenes of amusement which every succeeding day presented, suppressed the inclination for a time; but that it was not totally subdued will be seen hereafter.

The establishment and economy of our house were upon the most regular plan; the former consisted of six apprentices (including myself), and four assistants at very liberal stipends, besides a nephew of the elder partner, who superintended the whole, and officiated in the counting-house: there were also several porters and other subordinates, for all of whom full employment was found. Being the junior apprentice, it was my province to polish the counters, trim the lamps, carry out small parcels, and to perform other inferior duties; when disengaged from which, I assisted in waiting on the retail customers, and making myself otherwise useful behind the counter. We had a plentiful table appropriated for us, to which we retired in turn during the hours of business; commodious and airy chambers; and, in short, enjoyed every comfort we could desire.

For the first month of my probation I behaved extremely well, and by my quickness and assiduity gained the good opinion of my employers, who wrote of me in the most favourable terms to my friends in S——shire; nor did my expenses exceed my allowance for pocket-money, which was fully adequate to every rational enjoyment.

Among my fellow-apprentices was a young man named King, some years older than myself, with whom, from a similarity of sentiments, I formed a

* This was prior to the abolition of the Slave Trade.

close intimacy. He was of an excellent disposition, but a great lover of pleasure; and as his servitude was far advanced, and his prospects peculiarly flattering, he was under very little restraint, but gave the rein to his passion for dissipation. His expenses were profuse, but whether he indulged in them at the expense of his probity I could never ascertain. He soon introduced me to several young men of his own stamp, and I became in a short time as great a rake as the best of them: nor was our conversation confined to our own sex, scarcely a night passing without our visiting one or other of those houses consecrated to the Cyprian goddess, with which the town of Liverpool abounds. In such a course of life it is not likely that I could submit to limited hours; my companion and I seldom returned home before midnight, and sometimes not till the ensuing morning. Though we took measures to keep this from the ears of our employers, it could not fail to be known in time; and the consequence was a strong but tender remonstrance on my imprudence, which much affected me at the moment; but the impression was transitory, and soon effaced. I plunged deeper and deeper in the vortex of folly and dissipation, until I was obliged to have recourse for advice to the *Æsculapius* of Gilead-house.

This irregular mode of life had borne hard on my finances, but I had not, as yet, had recourse to fraud or peculation. I was liberally supplied by my relations on leaving S———, and had received my first quarterly allowance; but an event which soon followed tempted me to the first breach of confidence and integrity.

I had in my youth been passionately fond of cocking, a sport for which the county of S——— has been always famed; and though so young, I had constantly kept several cocks at walk, unknown to my parents, so that I had acquired a considerable share of experience and knowledge on the subject. One day, when

I was sent with some muslins to wait on a lady in the environs of Liverpool, near the canal, I accidentally passed a cockpit, where a great crowd was assembled, and I understood that a grand main was about to commence. Elated at this pleasing intelligence, I hastened to execute my commission; and returning to the house entered it, and leaving my wrapper of goods in care of the landlady, I ascended to the pit and took my seat. The company was, as usual, of a motley description, but there were many genteel persons. I ventured a few trifling bets at first, with various success; but at length an opportunity offering, which I considered as next to a certainty, I laid the odds to a large amount, flattering myself that by this stroke of judgment I should be enabled to figure away with increased éclat among my gay companions. After I had so done, greater odds were still vociferated, but in a moment the scene was changed! The fallen cock, in the agonies of death, made a desperate effort, and rising for a moment, cut the throat of his antagonist, who was standing over him in the act of crowing with exultation on his victory! The latter immediately fell, choked with the effusion of blood, nor did the victor survive him many moments. The whole pit resounded with acclamations, and the discord which ensued beggars description. I was not the only sufferer by this revolution of fortune; many others had laid higher odds than myself, and to a much greater amount. I was soon surrounded by my creditors, to whom I disbursed every shilling I had about me, among which were some pounds I had just received from the lady for goods, and for which I had given her a receipt. I was still something deficient, for which I pledged my honour to one of the parties, giving my address, and promising payment on an early day. I now returned home, filled with remorse and shame; but as the first false step of a young person insensibly leads to another, I added to my guilt

by concealing the affair from my employers, and directed them to book the articles the lady had selected. I had a degree of false shame about me, which rendered me incapable of confessing the truth and promising amendment, or all might still have been well. In the evening I had recourse to the bottle to drown my chagrin; and I determined to purloin a certain sum every day, in the course of my attendance on retail customers, until I had liquidated my debt of honour! Then, I vowed to stop and reform. Delusive idea! how little did I then know my own weakness, or the futility of such resolutions in a young mind! And who, that once begins a career of vice, can say to himself, "Thus far will I go, and no farther?" After I had discharged my engagement, I found a small sum must be raised for pocket-money and other exigencies, as it would be above two months before I could expect a remittance.

I therefore continued my speculation, and at length my evil genius suggested to me that I might, by venturing a small sum, become more fortunate at the cockpit, and repair the loss I had sustained,—as miracles don't happen every day, and the odds must win in the long run. Thus I argued with myself; and, fatally for me, I tried the experiment.

From this moment I never missed a day's fighting at the cockpit; and when sent on business which required my speedy return, I could not tear myself from the spot, but frequently staid out several hours, and afterwards forged a lie to account for my delay. I sometimes came off a winner, but as I was not then acquainted with the art of hedging, by which the knowing ones commonly save themselves, I was sure to be a loser at every week's end.

I managed matters so well, indeed, that my frequent secretions from the till were not discovered, however they might be suspected. The extensive trade of the shop rendered it next to impossible; and

what I abstracted was a trifle compared to the gross receipts of the day.

My continued misconduct became now the subject of frequent remonstrances on the part of Mr Parker, the resident partner; which not having the desired effect, that gentleman wrote to my friends, informing them in general terms that I had unhappily formed improper connexions, and that my late levity of conduct rendered me unfit to be received into their house; therefore desiring I might be recalled without delay. Mr Parker concluded with a remark, which I shall never forget, and which was peculiarly gratifying to my grandfather's (perhaps too partial) feelings: after expatiating on my general capacity for business, he added, "his smartness and activity are really wonderful." This letter produced a speedy answer, in consequence of which I was directed to hasten my departure, which took place in a few days, Mr Parker giving me a great deal of wholesome advice at parting; observing, that although it was not in his power to charge me with any direct criminality, my inconsiderate behaviour, and the continued excesses of my conduct, left but too much room for unfavourable conjectures.

Behold me now returned to my grandfather, after an absence of nearly five months; and this excursion may be called my first entrance into life. I could not help blushing at the consciousness of my own unworthiness; but the blind partiality of my dear parents induced them to believe me less culpable than I really was, and to listen readily to anything I had to offer in palliation of my errors.

CHAPTER IV.

I PREVAIL ON MY GRANDFATHER TO LET ME VISIT LONDON. AM PROVIDED WITH LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION. RECEIVED INTO THE OFFICE OF A RESPECTABLE ATTORNEY, MY KINSMAN. QUIT THAT EMPLOYMENT, AND ENGAGE WITH A WHOLESALE STATIONER. OBTAIN CLOTHES, &c., ON CREDIT, WITHOUT ANY INTENTION OF PAYING FOR THEM. BILK MY LODGINGS REPEATEDLY. RETURN TO THE LAW. OBLIGED TO LIVE BY MY WITS. BECOME A HACKNEY WRITER. RESORT NIGHTLY TO THE BLUE LION.

SHORTLY after my return from Liverpool, finding the narrow limits of a small market-town too circumscribed for my active disposition; and nothing having been determined on as to my future disposal, I entreated my parents to let me go to London, which I had always considered as the grand field for talents of every description, and where I doubted not of forwarding myself by the exercise of those I possessed. They at length consented; and, after the necessary preparations, I set out, receiving the blessings and prayers of these indulgent benefactors, and moderately supplied with money for my reasonable necessities.

My grandfather had of course many acquaintances in London, of his own profession, to several of whom he furnished me with letters of recommendation; it being his wish that I should by a few months' practice in a law office, ascertain how far I was disposed to be articed for the usual period, necessary to procure my admission. I had always been prepossessed

in favour of this profession, which I knew from my reading and experience to abound in variety, and, if I may be allowed the phrase, in pleasing perplexity.

On my arrival in town I waited first on a relation of our family, Mr P——, a young man lately established in the profession, and received as a partner by Mr M——, a gentleman of large fortune, and extensive practice, who would, it was probable, in a few years' time, retire from business in favour of my cousin.

The latter received me very kindly, and without hesitation offered to employ me (with his partner's concurrence) as copying-clerk, at a weekly salary, which, to a youth like me, was of course but small.

As I conceived this offer too advantageous to be rejected, I thankfully embraced it, and immediately entered on my function in Lincoln's-inn New square.

As I had no motives of affection to attract me to my father's house, I determined on becoming master of my own conduct, and accordingly took a neat private lodging, and regulated my mode of life conformably to the state of my finances. I breakfasted at home, dined at a tavern or genteel eating-house, and in the evening took my tea and read the papers at a coffee-house after which I sometimes passed the night in reading at home, but most commonly went to one of the theatres at half-price, where I gratified my violent passion for the drama, which at once improved my understanding and amused my mind.

This course of life, though it rapidly weakened my purse, was rational, compared to that which I soon after led; and I might have supported it with credit, by the indulgence of my friends, for a considerable time. As the business of our office was of a various nature, I soon gained great experience in the different branches of common law and conveyancing: I became by practice, an expert and correct copyist; and I delighted much in studying the most approved law books, reading reports of cases, &c. I became

familiar with Burn's Justice, and soon gained a pretty correct knowledge of the criminal law, and of those minute points, of which an able counsel or attorney can avail himself, in order to rescue a client from the claws of justice, howsoever glaring and palpable his guilt may be. Such is the glorious uncertainty of the English law! Little did I then conceive how useful this knowledge might one day prove to myself; of which more hereafter. I merely pursued this intricate study by way of exercising my ingenuity and gratifying my curiosity.

I must here inform the reader, that these various pursuits and studies were not confined to the short term of my continuance in the employ of which I am now writing. After I quitted the office of Messrs M—— and P——, and during the course of a wild and dissipated life, they formed one of my favourite domestic amusements; as did, in fact, reading in general: and throughout the most profligate stages of my future career, which I shall hereafter narrate, a portion of my time was always devoted to the perusal of books, and a part of my money, however hardly or dishonestly obtained, to the purchase of them: and to this moment I still consider them the most valuable property a man of my disposition can possess.

About three months after my arrival in town I began to grow less regular in my manner of life; my expenses increased, and I became negligent of the office hours. I had contracted an intimacy with several young persons of both sexes, which unavoidably engaged me in a course of expensive dissipation, to which my means were inadequate. Though I occasionally derived small supplies from my grandfather, yet, as he had no idea of the extent of my expenditure, they were comparatively trifling. Mr P——, finding I was not to be reclaimed by advice, and having no authority to use any other means, at length, for the credit of his office, and for fear I should conta-

minate the other clerks, gave me a formal, though civil dismissal, which I received without surprise, as I knew I had long deserved it.

I was now tired of the law, or rather of the restraint I was under, in an office of that description; but still I found it necessary to have some employment, as well to amuse me as to contribute to my support.

I therefore engaged myself as assistant in the warehouse of Messrs Key and Sons, wholesale stationers in Abchurch lane, Lombard street, at a weekly salary of one guinea, which was more by half than I had received from my last employers, and equal to the pay of an experienced clerk in an attorney's office at that time of day. This situation I obtained through the interest of one of my fellow-rakes, the son of a substantial citizen, who roundly vouched for my integrity and diligent conduct. My employment here was to superintend the packing of goods for exportation and home consumption; to write invoices, copy letters, ship goods at the custom-house, &c. I continued, however, but a short time in this situation; confinement to the east end of the town prevented my associating with my old acquaintances, who chiefly dwelt in the environs of Covent garden or the purlieus of Drury lane.

During an abode of ten months in London, as I was frequently pushed for money, I availed myself of a genteel appearance and pretty good address, and taking advantage of the credulity of several tradesmen in the neighbourhood, I ordered wearing apparel of various kinds, and sometimes other goods, upon credit, without much concern about the day of payment; however, I always took care to procure a bill of parcels with the articles, which precluded any charge of fraud, and left the matter at the worst but a debt contracted; for which, being a minor, I knew I could not be arrested. This was my first deviation from honesty since I left Liverpool. I was also frequ

my lodgings ; and, as payment of my rent would have required ready money, for which I had so many other uses, I commonly decamped under favour of the night, having previously removed my effects by various stratagems. As I was ashamed to let my grandfather know the true state of my affairs, and as I really grieved at the expenses I had already caused him, which I knew had much inconvenienced him, I forbore at last to trouble him for remittances ; but falsely assured him that I was doing well, and enabled to live upon the profits of my industry. I desired he would abandon the idea of articling me to the law, as the expenses attending admission had of late years been so much increased by stamp duties ; and as I could, if I continued the study, at a future period, practise under the sanction of another person's name, a custom then very prevalent, though irregular. By these assurances I quieted the good old man, and silenced any inquiries my friends might have instituted respecting me : as I now really wished to continue free from all restraint upon my person or actions, and foolishly flattered myself that I should by some lucky event ultimately secure the means of independence. These conjectures were, however, perfectly vague, and proceeding from no fixed idea whatever.

On quitting my city employment I returned to the law, for which I still retained a partiality, and obtained a more liberal salary than before, in an office equally respectable. Indeed, I was now become more useful, and had improved much, both in person and address, since my arrival in town.

I was still frequently reduced to pecuniary straits, and obliged to have recourse to various expedients, known only to men of the town, for my support : some of them, indeed, were bordering on dishonesty, and none of them very honourable. But to describe them individually is impossible, and a man " who lives by his wits," as the phrase is, will assure you,

if called to account, that he really could not for his life tell by what distinct means he makes out a living.

As I now wrote uncommonly fast, I quitted the station of a weekly clerk, and obtained writings to copy by the sheet, from the law stationers, by which I could earn considerably more money; and in this employment I continued to labour diligently for several hours every day, and sometimes half the night.

When I had a mind to relax from this occupation, and particularly if my finances were at a low ebb, I frequently resorted to the Blue Lion, in Gray's inn lane, a house noted for selling fine ale, and crowded every night with a motley assemblage of visitors, among whom were many thieves, sharpers, and other desperate characters, with their doxies. I was introduced to this house (from which hundreds of young persons may date their ruin) by a fellow-clerk, who appeared to have a personal intimacy with most of these obnoxious persons; however, though I listened eagerly to their conversation (part of which was then unintelligible to me), and fancied them people of uncommon spirit, I was not yet sufficiently depraved to cultivate their acquaintance, but sat with a pipe in my mouth, enveloped in smoke, ruminating like a philosopher on the various characters who tread the great stage of life, and felt a sort of secret presentiment that I was myself born to undergo a more than common share of vicissitudes and disappointments. How far these ideas were well grounded, the reader will judge when he has perused this narrative, of which I shall here close the fourth chapter.

CHAPTER V.

THE TRIP TO PORTSMOUTH.

DURING my nightly resorts to the Blue Lion, in Gray's inn lane, I one evening fell into conversation, at that house, with a young man of decent appearance, a few years older than myself. We were so mutually pleased with each other, that at parting an appointment to breakfast together the next morning was the consequence; and on this second meeting our intimacy so far increased, that we began to explain our respective situations in life to each other. My new acquaintance, whose name was D——, informed me that he had lately quitted his majesty's ship *Montague*, of 74 guns, on board of which he had served as steward to the commander, captain Patterson; that having lived freely for some months on shore, he had now spent all his money, and was so much reduced, that he really knew not how to subsist any longer, and concluded with expressing his intention to proceed immediately to Portsmouth, in the hope of obtaining a similar birth to his former one. I assured him that I was, like himself, so much reduced, as to find the utmost difficulty in existing at all, and that if he would permit me to join my fortune to his, I should without hesitation feel happy in the opportunity of accompanying him to Portsmouth in quest of some employment. He declared that nothing would afford him greater pleasure, and it was agreed that we should, each of us without delay, convert our spare apparel, &c., into cash, and set out the very next day. I accordingly lost no time in the needful preparations, and having bilked my landlord, with whom I was

some few weeks in arrears, I met D—— the same evening, and after indulging in a farewell cruize, which sensibly diminished our slender finances, we took a few hours' repose, and at eight o'clock the next morning commenced our peregrination.

On a comparison of our personal effects, it appeared that we possessed between us about twenty shillings in money, and had each a spare shirt, neckcloth, and hose, in a bundle, which (traveller-like) we carried across our shoulders on a good oak stick. We were both decently clad, in good health, and in high spirits notwithstanding our poverty. We agreed that, to save expenses, we should perform the journey on foot, (being seventy-two miles) and we calculated that, with frugality, we should be enabled to defray the contingent charges for diet and lodging on the road. It soon appeared, however, that though good economists in theory, we were not so in practice; for as we both loved good cheer, and the severity of the weather required a suitable fortification, we had expended half our stock by the time we got to Kingston, our first stage, and only twelve miles from town. Here we put up at a public house, called the Eight Bells, and having enjoyed a good dinner, which was succeeded by some excellent mulled elder wine of the landlady's own composition, and which was peculiarly adapted to the season of the year; we liked our quarters so well that we spent not only the night, but half the next day, in the enjoyments of repose, eating, drinking, and smoking, before it occurred to either of us that every item of those said enjoyments was recorded in chalk by the hostess, and would inevitably be consolidated in the shape of a bill, which we must discharge before a clearance could be obtained for the next port. Having at length recollected ourselves, and called "to pay," our reckoning amounted to three or four shillings more than we possessed in our common purse. As it was impossible to think of proceeding

any farther without recruiting, we were now in no small consternation. Bilking the landlady was out of the question, for we had given our bundles into her charge on first entering the house, and their contents were not only indispensably necessary to us, but also worth more than the sum required to release them. In this dilemma a sudden thought struck me. Calling for pen, ink, and paper, I told my companion I had a scheme in my head for raising a supply, but would not impart it until I had tried its success. I then drew up a sort of memorial to the following effect:—

“ To the Ladies and Gentlemen of Kingston,—

“ The writer hereof, a young man of respectable family, and good education, having by a series of misfortunes been reduced to the greatest distress, is now on his way to Portsmouth, in hopes of procuring a situation in the navy; but being destitute of money for his present support, humbly solicits your charitable assistance towards enabling him to pursue his journey. To a noble mind, the pleasure of doing a good action is its own reward. The smallest donations will be gratefully received; and any lady or gentleman inclined to relieve the writer is earnestly requested to subscribe his or her name hereto.”

Having completed this production, I desired my friend to wait patiently for my return, and assured him I doubted not of bringing speedy relief. I now set out on my expedition, and immediately waited on Mr Mayor, who was a grocer; but in this first essay I was unsuccessful. His worship declared he never encouraged applications of this sort from strangers; and desired me to go about my business. I however took the liberty of subscribing his name to my memorial, by way of sanction, and gave his charity credit for a donation of five shillings. Young as I was at that time, I well knew that example in matters of this kind goes a great way; and that many persons,

without a grain of Christian benevolence in their composition, will give liberally from motives of ostentation, when they see that their neighbours have already contributed, and that their own names and donations will also be made public. I experienced the truth of this notion, for I was successful in almost every application I afterwards made. Having visited a number of genteel houses, with various success, I was on the point of returning to impart my good luck to my companion, when coming to a very handsome mansion-house in the suburbs of the town, I thought I ought not to omit calling, and a person at that moment passing by, I inquired whose residence it was, and which was the entrance to the premises ; for the house was situated in the midst of a spacious pleasure-ground, remote from the high road, and it being quite dusk, I had not observed any avenue by which I could gain access to it. I was informed that it was the residence of lady W——, that a little further on I should perceive a door in the brick wall, which extended along the road side, and that if I entered at that door and proceeded in a strait direction, I should arrive at the servants' hall ; but my informer cautioned me to keep close to another wall on my left hand, which divided this avenue from the lawn in front of the mansion, because there was a very large and fierce dog at the upper end, but which, being chained up, could not reach me, if I followed the above directions. I thanked this obliging person, and immediately proceeded to the door described, which I entered, and walked cautiously, and not without some fear, by the wall-side, till I perceived by the lights in the kitchen and out-offices that I was near the premises.

It was now very dark, and I was carefully exploring my way, my mind full of apprehensions at the thought of this terrible dog ; when lo ! at that instant, to my inexpressible consternation, the ferocious animal made

a spring at me, and I gave myself up for dead. However, though he was certainly within a yard of me, he did me no mischief, but my alarm was so great that, without knowing how or where to fly for refuge, I ran precipitately from the spot, and when I recovered from the fright found myself in the pleasure-ground in front of the mansion-house. It appeared that I had, without knowing, escaped through a door in the wall, which was open on my left hand at the moment I was alarmed by the dog. I was now more at a loss than ever, for I knew no way to get out of the pleasure-ground, except by the aforesaid door, and fear of the dog prevented my attempting that passage. After wandering about for a few minutes I approached the mansion, and going up to one of the parlour windows, which were very large, and on a level with the terrace before the house, I applied my eye to the glass, and discovered through an aperture in the inside shutters, a numerous and splendid party of ladies and gentlemen at dinner. Having considered a moment, I determined on a very bold step, as I saw no alternative but remaining all night in the open air, exposed to the inclemency of the weather. Taking advantage of a pause in the company's conversation, I tapped with my finger at the window, and immediately the whole party were struck with wonder. In the midst of their surprise I repeated my knock, and then, after several voices exclaiming "Good God! there is certainly somebody at the window," &c., a gentleman rose from the table, and advancing towards me, opened first the shutters, and then the window itself, which might, in fact, be called a pair of folding doors, and these being thrown back, I walked in with the most respectful air I could assume, and presented myself to the astonished company. Having bowed twice or thrice, and given time for their alarm to subside, I began to make my speech.

Apologizing for my presumptuous intrusion, I stated

in a concise manner the fright I had endured from the dog, my embarrassment at not being able to find means of egress from the pleasure-ground, and my having consequently taken the liberty of knocking at the window. I then presented my memorial, which was read in turn by most of the company, each of whom surveyed me with evident surprise. Having answered such queries as they thought proper to put to me, I was desired by the lady of the house to withdraw to the kitchen for a short time, and a servant was ordered to attend me thither. Here I had my story to repeat for the information of the domestics, who laughed heartily at the adventure of the dog, but afterwards seriously assured me that, had the animal not been chained, or had I approached within his reach, he would inevitably have torn me to pieces. The parlour dinner being over, and the dishes brought out, I was desired to fall to, and being really hungry I wanted no pressing, but selected from the variety of good things on the table a very fine buttock of beef, on which substantial fare I made a sumptuous meal. There was no scarcity of good malt liquor, and lady W—— very kindly sent me out a pint of red port, with a particular injunction (which by-the-by was unnecessary) that I should eat and drink heartily.

At length I was summoned to attend the company in the parlour, and her ladyship then expressing her concern for my misfortunes, and her anxious hope that I should speedily find an end to them, presented me with half-a-guinea. The rest of the party also said many handsome things, and the majority of them contributed to my relief. In addition to these favours, one of the gentlemen, at the particular request of lady W——, took the trouble to write a letter in my behalf to the captain of a man-of-war, supposed to be then lying at Portsmouth, entreating him to give me an appointment under him. Her ladyship, after obliging me to take another glass of wine, and re-

peating her sorrow for my distress, advised me to lose no time in prosecuting my journey, ordered a servant to conduct me to the door at which I had first entered her premises, and I took a respectful leave of this truly benevolent party.

Returning to the Eight Bells, I imparted my adventures to my friend, who was of course much pleased at my success, for I had realized between four and five pounds. I found this begging scheme so productive, that I was in no hurry to pursue the Portsmouth speculation, and as we were both satisfied with our present quarters, it was agreed that we should continue a few days longer at Kingston, in which time I proposed to follow up my success by making a regular circuit among the inhabitants; and I in fact determined to levy similar contributions in every town which lay in our route.

It is to be observed, that this idea of raising money was perfectly original in me, for at that time I had never heard of such a practice, but have since discovered that it is a very common expedient, and is called by those persons who live by such impositions, "the letter racket."

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The following day I again sallied forth, and met with equal success, visiting not only the houses of private persons, but even the respectable shopkeepers, &c.; and I may here state, once for all, that in the course of this, as well as my subsequent speculations of the same nature, I met with various receptions, according to the charitable or churlish dispositions of the people to whom I applied. Many pitied my case and cheerfully relieved me; others expressed equal commiseration but declined giving anything, either because "they never encouraged beggars," or "they had poor enough of their own to maintain." Some invited me into their parlours, treated me with excessive politeness, and obliged me to take refreshment at their own tables; and where there were any young

ladies in the family, I was an object of particular solicitude, and the recital of my misfortunes drew many a sigh from their tender bosoms. Others desired me, like the mayor of Kingston, to go about my business, and hinted that I ought to be sent to the house of correction as a vagrant. Sometimes the servants who admitted me refused to present my memorial, declaring they had strict orders from their masters or mistresses never to trouble them on such an occasion. The donations I commonly received, were from one shilling to five; sometimes, but rarely, I was presented with gold, particularly at the seats of the nobility and gentry, all which, laying within a short distance of the road I travelled, I made a point of calling at; and for my information on this subject, I provided myself with a comprehensive book of roads, in which those objects are correctly laid down. Some truly charitable persons, but whose means were limited, relieved me with sixpence, and of course I was bound to accept such a trifle with as much appearance of thankfulness as I would a larger sum; and frequently, when I called at a farm-house by the road-side, I have been compelled to take some cold meat, or other eatables, which I afterwards bestowed upon the first more needy beggar I met on my way. It was my custom, in general, to travel on foot, making short stages, and putting up at a good inn in every town I entered, where I lived upon the best during my stay, and associated with London riders, and other respectable guests. When tired of walking, I availed myself of a passing stage coach, or return post-chaise, and my only equipage was a spare shirt, handkerchief, &c., which, with my book of roads, I carried in a small bundle under my arm.

To resume my narrative; I returned from my second day's excursion about dusk in the evening, and entering the Eight Bells, was surprised at not finding my companion within. On inquiring of the

landlady, the good woman informed me, with some degree of terror, that two of the town constables had been in search of me; and kindly exhorted me, if I was conscious of having done wrong, to make the best of my way from Kingston, as she expected them to call again every minute; adding, that she believed my friend was gone out in quest of me. I smiled at the landlady's fears, and thanking her for her friendly advice, assured her I was unconscious of any crime, and should willingly face the officers, come when they might. I then desired to have some tea, which she set about preparing, during which interval my fellow-traveller came in. I briefly concerted with him the plan we should respectively act, in case of our being called upon to give an account of ourselves, though I had no conception on what grounds I was to be apprehended. We now proceeded to take our tea, but before we had half finished it, the constables entered the room, and informed me they had orders to carry me before the magistrates, who were then assembled in the town hall; and that the young man, who they understood to be my comrade, must also accompany me. I answered, I would with pleasure attend them, but requested time to finish our repast, which they consented to allow us; and we then proceeded all together to the town-hall, the officers carrying our two bundles, which they had obtained from the landlady, by order of the justices. Being brought before the bench, I immediately recognised among the persons in attendance, one of the gentlemen I had seen at lady W——'s dinner party, and the very same who had written the letter of recommendation to captain ——. This gentleman now stated to the magistrates the circumstances of my coming to lady W——'s house the preceding evening, the extraordinary manner in which I had made my appearance, and the reception I had met with; and further stated, that the ensuing morning it was discovered that a part of the fence en-

closing the pleasure-ground had been broken, and other damage done on the premises, which led to a suspicion that I might be an impostor, who had a design to rob the house, or to do some other mischief, and that he, therefore, on the part of lady W——, wished me to be examined by their worships, and obliged to give some farther account of myself.

Though the suspicions of lady W. and her friends appeared to have been very weakly founded, and their idea to be utterly extravagant, the justices entered seriously into the spirit of the business, and ordering us to be set apart from each other, proceeded to interrogate us strictly as to our professions, business in Kingston, the objects of our journey, &c. I, for my part, adhered to the story I had before framed, which it is needless to repeat to the reader, being devoid of interest, and, as it was for the most part utterly false, I cannot now minutely recollect it. My companion's account of himself was nearer the truth. He stated that he had been an officer's servant in the navy, and was now on his way to Portsmouth in quest of a similar situation, but denied any farther knowledge of me than joining me by accident on the road, and as I was bound to the same place, we had agreed to keep each other company. Our bundles, being next inspected, were found to contain nothing of a suspicious nature, except a number of pawn-brokers' duplicates, and these we respectively accounted for as relating to wearing apparel, &c., which our pecuniary distress had obliged us to pledge. This part of the story was indeed strictly true, and in my case corroborated and gave an air of probability to my account. Nothing appearing to warrant the detention of my companion, he was discharged, but with a positive order to quit the town instantly. As to myself, having mentioned, in answer to a query from one of the magistrates, the name of a certain gentleman in London, who knew me and my family,

his worship declared he was himself intimately acquainted with that gentleman, and as he was going to town the next day he should make a point of referring to him as to the truth of my assertion. He therefore ordered a constable to detain me in custody until his return from London. I was accordingly confined in the officer's house, where I had every necessary accommodation, for the expenses of which the magistrate himself very kindly became accountable. My companion visited me the same evening, prior to his departure, and I divided with him the money I had acquired. It was his intention to proceed direct to Portsmouth, and I promised as soon as I was liberated to follow him, taking a direction whereby to find him on my arrival.

The ensuing evening the magistrate returned from town, and immediately sent for me to his own house. Being brought before his worship, who was a brewer, named Sidebottom, I found him seated, not on the chair of justice, but on a stool in his counting-house. The old gentleman began by remarking with some severity on the impropriety and turpitude of my conduct, in withdrawing myself from the protection of my respectable friends, and traversing the country under such debasing circumstances. He said he had understood from his friend Mr Howell, that my relations were both able and willing to take care of my fortunes. After a long expostulation to the same effect, his worship continued, "Perhaps you are not aware that it is in my power to commit you to Bridewell for a month for begging without a pass." Then raising his voice, and brandishing his pen, he exclaimed with a very pompous air, "Young man, I shall certainly—discharge you." The two latter words relieved me from a momentary anxiety; for when his worship paused I certainly expected he would add "commit you." He proceeded,—“but, on the express condition that you immediately quit this town, and return to

your friends. If you are found hercabouts after this night, expect to be severely dealt with." I gladly accepted these terms, and assuring the old gentleman of my compliance took a respectful leave; his worship giving me a little more wholesome advice, and generously presenting me with half-a-crown, as he said, to carry me to London.

Being now discharged I repaired to the Eight Bells, where I settled with my landlady, and learned from her that my companion had left Kingston the preceding night at a late hour by the Portsmouth coach. I slept this night at the Eight Bells, and the next morning returned to London, where on my arrival I found myself in possession of above five pounds, after all the impediments I had met with.

As I made a point of keeping my word with my late fellow-traveller, I determined on having one jovial evening in town, and resuming my journey the next day, by the same route as before, notwithstanding justice Sidelbottom's prohibition. As to presenting myself to Mr Howell, or going near any of my friends, nothing was more foreign to my thoughts.

The following morning I accordingly set out on my second expedition by the Kingston stage, and arriving at that town, took up my lodging at a public-house in the suburbs. Notwithstanding the check I had before met with, I was so hardy as to stop three days in Kingston, during which I levied contributions on most of the inhabitants, taking care to avoid that part of the town I had before visited, and I was so lucky as to meet with no interruption to my success. From Kingston I proceeded to Guildford, taking in my way Cobham, Ripley, and the intervening villages; from Guildford to Godalming, thence to Liphook, where I altered my course, and took a circuitous route the way of Chichester to Portsmouth. This journey occupied about a fortnight, and arriving at Portsmouth I soon found my late companion, D——,

who was lodged at the house of an acquaintance, and not having yet obtained a berth on ship-board had engaged himself as an occasional clerk and assistant to a tradesman in the town. I myself hired a small apartment in St Mary's street, intending to remain a week or two in Portsmouth, where I had never before been, and to enjoy such amusements as the place afforded, as long as my money lasted. As my friend D—— appeared to have dropped the idea of going on ship-board, I became also careless on that subject, particularly as the motive which gave rise to that design (namely, poverty) no longer existed, for I was now possessed, after all the expenses of travelling, &c., of about fifteen pounds.

I spent several days in viewing the town, dock-yard, fleet, &c., and in the evening generally visited the theatre, which was then open. About a week after my arrival, reading the Portsmouth weekly paper, I saw an advertisement for a clerk; and, as I found that some means of subsistence would soon become necessary, and it was indifferent to me in what part of the kingdom I sojourned, I determined to offer myself. Inquiring, as directed, of Mottley, the bookseller, on the Parade, I was referred to Moses Greetham, esq., judge-advocate, also an attorney of the first eminence. That gentleman without hesitation engaged me at a guinea a week, and I next morning commenced my attendance at his office in High street. About the same time my companion D—— suddenly quitted the town, without acquainting me of his intention; and I was informed on inquiry that he had gone to Southampton, but on what speculation I never learned, nor did I ever afterwards see or hear more of him.

The nature of my new employment was very agreeable and full of variety. Besides Mr Greetham's public duties on courts-martial, and his general practice as a solicitor, he had a great deal of business

relating to prizes, their condemnation, sale, proceeds, &c.; and on these occasions all the parties concerned met in a spacious room at the Crown inn, where an elegant dinner, with wines in abundance, was invariably provided at the expense of the clients. These dinners occurred three or four times every week, and as they were afterwards succeeded by coffee, &c., the expenses of living to myself and the other clerk of Mr Greetham, who (as well as the latter gentleman) always partook of the entertainment, were considerably diminished. During intervals, between dinner, tea, &c., we retired to an adjoining room, where an hour or two was devoted to writing depositions, examining ships' papers, and other matters relative to the cause in question. This was in fact one of the best situations I ever met with, and from its respectability would, no doubt, had I continued steady, have ultimately led to prosperity and independence; but my evil genius interposed to ruin this, as well as all my former hopes of happiness.

The circumstance which occasioned my losing this place was indeed very trivial, and hardly amounted to a crime. Among the number of persons with whom we transacted business, was a native of Holland, who acted in many cases as an interpreter to Mr Greetham, on the part of those concerned in prize causes. This man being an original, both in person and manners, was an inexhaustible subject of laughter to myself and fellow-clerk, who was much older than me, and we omitted no opportunity of indulging in mirth at his expense. As he was not possessed of much penetration, and was of a very placid disposition, he was commonly insensible of our jokes, or at least took them in good part; but one afternoon, when we were all three taking coffee together, the Dutchman rising from his seat on some occasion, with a cup of boiling-hot coffee in his hand, my brother-clerk, who was just then in a merry vein,

winked at me to withdraw the interpreter's chair. I obeyed the signal with alacrity, and the poor fellow, attempting to resume his seat, was in a moment thrown keel upwards, and as he fell received the boiling fluid full in the face. I was so unfeelingly mischievous as to laugh immoderately at the pain and embarrassment of the poor Dutchman, who certainly cut a most ridiculous figure; but my fellow-clerk, who possessed more prudence than myself, restrained his mirth, and with a serious air affected to condole with the sufferer on his misfortune. He even carried his hypocrisy so far as to express displeasure at the mischievous trick I had played. I felt much indignation at his duplicity of conduct, and regretted when too late that I had suffered myself to be made the dupe of his treachery; for I was afterwards convinced that he was jealous of my abilities, and feared I should supplant him in the favour of Mr Greetham. The consequence of this injudicious frolic was, that the interpreter complained to my employer, who the next morning rebuked me severely for behaving with such unbecoming freedom towards a respectable man in his immediate service; and, observing such levity of conduct rendered me unfit for his office, Mr Greetham presented me with a guinea, although this was only the second day of the week, and declared he had no farther occasion for me.

Being now once more disengaged, I began to think of returning to London; but having still a little money left I continued about a week longer in Portsmouth, during which time I took up my lodging at the Blue Posts tavern, in Point street, where I lived in the most sumptuous manner, drinking my wine freely, and pretending that I was waiting for the departure of the East India fleet, in which I was going out a passenger, and that I expected my baggage from town in a few days. I had, while in the

service of Mr Greetham, made several efforts to obtain clothes, &c., upon the credit of my living with that gentleman; but I found the Portsmouth tradesman too wary to be imposed upon, and only succeeded to a trifling amount. I had, however, bilked my late lodging in St Mary's street, and intended playing the same trick at the Blue Posts. Finding at length that the landlord and waiters viewed me with scrutinizing eyes, and appeared tacitly to ask for payment of my reckoning, I left the coffee-room one evening after dinner, on pretence of going to the play, and immediately quitted the town, taking the road to Petersfield on foot.

On arriving at the latter place, which I had omitted in my journey downwards, by striking into the Chichester road at Liphook, I levied a small contribution, under the old pretext of going to Portsmouth, &c., and then pursued my course to London, where I arrived in good spirits, after an absence of eight weeks, with about ten pounds in my pocket, having lived well during my expedition, and enjoyed a variety of pleasant entertainment.

CHAPTER VI.

STILL MUCH EMBARRASSED TO SUPPORT APPEARANCES. MEET WITH THE SURGEON OF A FRIGATE. OUR CONVERSATION AND ITS RESULT. NEGOCIATION SET ON FOOT WITH THE CAPTAIN. I OBTAIN AN APPOINTMENT AS MIDSHIPMAN. FITTED OUT BY MY FRIENDS IN THE MOST LIBERAL MANNER. JOIN MY SHIP. DELIGHTED WITH MY NEW SITUATION. ACCOUNT OF MY MESSMATES, AND OTHER MATTERS.

I HAD continued some months in this course of life, and was frequently reduced to very great shifts; on these occasions I had recourse to those accommodating persons called pawnbrokers, who obligingly lend money at the moderate interest of seventy-three hundred per cent. ! as has been clearly proved in a late publication. I sometimes raised the wind by my old expedient of obtaining goods on credit, called in the cant language *margin*: these I converted into ready money for immediate purposes. By such artifices I contrived to support a genteel appearance, though sometimes bordering on the shabby. My principal enjoyments, indeed, were not of the most extravagant nature, with the exception of theatrical amusements. I commonly spent my evenings (if not at the Blue Lion) at some genteel port or chop-house, frequented chiefly by attorneys' clerks and the neighbouring tradesmen; where I enjoyed a pipe and an evening paper, and at the same time listened to the conversation of the surrounding guests, amusing myself with their various characters and peculiarities. I frequently dined, from

the same motives, at different ordinaries, particularly one at the Saracen's Head, Snowhill.

One day, after dining at this house, I adjourned to the coffee-room, and, seating myself in a box, called for a glass of negus and a daily paper. I was soon joined by a gentleman of a very prepossessing aspect, who I perceived, by the buttons on his coat, to be a warrant officer in the navy. After the customary compliments we entered into conversation, and he soon let me understand that he was surgeon of a frigate called the *Astræa*.

Delighted with an opportunity of expatiating on my favourite topic, I asked many questions concerning the service; and the eagerness of my manner convinced this gentleman that I had a strong inclination to enter into it. He appeared pleased with the vivacity of my manner and the pertinence of my remarks; and having extracted from me a confession of my inclinations, and a brief account of my family and expectancies, he with the greatest kindness undertook to write in my favour to captain Dacres, his commander, who was then at his seat in Devonshire, the frigate being in dock at Sheerness; assuring me there was little doubt of my obtaining a midshipman's birth, provided my friends would consent to it, and fit me out in a suitable manner for the occasion. I was in raptures at the result of this fortunate meeting; and, expressing the warmest gratitude for such friendship shewn to an utter stranger, assured Mr Kennedy (for this was the surgeon's name) of my choice being approved by my grandfather, who anxiously wished me to fix on some profession which might afford a prospect of future independence. It was therefore settled that Mr Kennedy should write to the captain without delay, and that I should immediately entreat my grandfather to sanction my views, and to write also to captain Dacres, requesting his approbation and commands respecting me. Mr Kennedy further

recommended that I should in the interim take a trip to Sheerness, and wait on the commanding officer, Mr Rowley, who was then, with the *Astræa's* crew, on board the *Carolina* hulk, during the frigate's repair. For this end he furnished me with a line of introduction to lieutenant Rowley, and added that he should himself be at Sheerness, where his family resided, in a few days. He observed that I should be much amused with the excursion, as I had never been on board a king's ship, and that I should also open an acquaintance with the young gentlemen who, in all probability, were to be my future messmates and companions.

I immediately wrote in the most pressing terms to my grandfather, assuring him that his refusal to ratify my choice would render me completely miserable; but that if I was indulged in my desire, I would never again become troublesome to any of my friends, or betray any future signs of inconstancy or caprice. I concluded with expressing my hopes of his receiving a favourable answer from the captain, and that I should in a few days have this intimation communicated in a letter from himself, approving of the steps I had taken.

Having so done, I equipped myself as handsomely as my means would admit, and the next day set out for Sheerness, where I arrived in high spirits, and proceeded on board the *Carolina*. On presenting my credentials to the first lieutenant I was very politely received, and invited to the ward-room, where I was introduced to several other officers, who, on learning my intentions, and that I was recommended by the doctor, welcomed me in the kindest terms, and highly commended my spirit. After refreshing myself, Mr Rowley sent for a midshipman, whom he requested to shew me every attention, and to introduce me to his messmates as a person likely soon to become a brother Mid. This young man obeyed with the greatest

pleasure, and I soon became perfectly at home. My conductor next took me through every part of the hulk, and I was both pleased and astonished at the novelty of the objects I met with. The hulk had been a line-of-battle ship, and her interior was, of course, extensive and capacious. The decks were crowded with hucksters, who exposed provisions, fruits, and other articles for sale. Groups of sailors with their girls were seen dancing to the music of a fiddle or a fife; others were engaged at cards, draughts, &c. Grog was everywhere the order of the day; but still the most perfect regularity and cleanliness pervaded every part of this wooden world. Having satisfied my curiosity, I returned to the midshipmen's birth, which was merely a large space in the after-part of the orlop deck, enclosed with canvass to render it warm and private. I obtained from these young gentlemen a list of such clothes, books, instruments, &c., as were requisite to form a genteel out-fit, and an estimate of the probable cost of the whole, which I found to be at least eighty pounds. I now received, by the ward-room steward, an invitation to dine with the lieutenants, &c. The party was increased by the company of some ladies from the shore, and the repast was excellent. Wit, wine, and grog, abounded, and I now conceived I had found the sphere of life in which I could enjoy unalloyed happiness. After sitting a reasonable time I expressed a wish to view the town of Sheerness, the dock-yard, &c., and requested Mr Rowley to permit the midshipman before-mentioned to go on shore with me. To this he kindly assented, and ordered a boat to be manned on purpose, stipulating however that we should return at a reasonable hour, and that I would make use of a spare cot in the cabin of the third lieutenant, who was absent on leave. My kind young friend shewed me the objects most worthy of remark; and we then journeyed to the Marlborough Head inn, where we

took some coffee, and about eight o'clock returned to the hulk. My conductor, having reported his return to the first lieutenant, wished me good night, and I took a seat at the ward-room table, where the party was now reduced to the first and second lieutenants, the master, purser, and lieutenant of marines. I now found that grog was to be the order of the night also; but as I had never been accustomed to that beverage in the way they drank it, I could not help betraying my dislike; on which Mr Rowley, in a good-humoured way, assured me that I should never make a sailor without I could learn to drink grog. I was therefore constrained to make a glass, which I did pretty stiff, as the sailors term it; and its inspiring qualities soon caused me to banish all reserve. Mr Rowley conversed with great appearance of regard on my future prospects; gave me a most amiable character of the captain; and instructed me in the outlines of my duty, as well as in the conduct I ought to pursue for my own advantage. He informed me the *Astræa* would be undocked in about three weeks, and that I had therefore no time to lose in equipping myself.

After as pleasant and rational an evening as I ever remember to have spent, I retired to rest in the neat little cabin I have before mentioned, and slept for the first time in my life on salt water. The next morning, after breakfast, I had the pleasure of seeing my worthy friend the surgeon, who had just arrived from town. He insisted on my dining with himself and family ashore; I therefore took a respectful leave of Mr Rowley and the other gentlemen in the ward-room. A most cordial farewell of my brother Mids, as I was proud to call them; and, receiving the wishes of all parties for my speedy return to join the ship, I accompanied Mr Kennedy on shore. I spent a pleasant day at his lodgings, and in the evening set out on my return to London, highly pleased

with my excursion, and indulging the most pleasing hopes of future happiness.

In a week's time I had the pleasure of receiving a letter from my grandfather, wherein he informed me that my entreaties were granted, though with much reluctance on the part of most of my friends; and enclosing a handsome letter from captain Dacres, who expressed his willingness to receive me as a midshipman on board his majesty's ship *Astræa*, out of respect to the recommendation of his surgeon, and because he would not defeat the hopes of a young man who might one day prove an ornament to the service. My grandfather concluded with desiring I would immediately come down to S——shire, for the purpose of taking leave of my friends and receiving the necessary sum to defray the expenses of my equipment.

I obeyed this welcome summons without delay, and after a stay of several days at S——, I took an affectionate leave of all my relatives, who could not divest themselves of anxiety on my account, and returned to town with nearly one hundred pounds in my pocket, my other friends having contributed liberally to assist my grandfather in this emergency.

On arriving in town I took lodgings in the New Exchange coffee-house, in the Strand, being a house frequented by naval officers, and to which lieutenant Rowley had recommended me. My first care was to purchase a large and strong chest, which having sent to my lodgings, I proceeded to buy linen, bedding, uniforms, books, &c. &c., and of course did not forget an elegant hanger, a dirk, and a cocked-hat richly bound with gold lace.

I was so diligent in this affair that in ten days I had everything ready; and, embarking with my luggage on board a Sheerness packet, the same day sailed down the river Thames. After a favourable passage we arrived at Sheerness; and, as we passed through

the fleet, I had the pleasure of seeing my ship lashed alongside the Carolina, having the preceding day come out of dock. As soon as the sloop anchored I went on board the hulk, and was received with kind encouragement by my superior officers, and with the most lively pleasure by my future messmates. Mr Rowley very kindly sent the cutter to bring my chest, &c., from the packet, and I was then formally introduced by that gentleman to the midshipmen's birth. After a jovial evening, spent in festivity and merriment, I retired to my hammock, in which I slept well, notwithstanding the novelty of my situation. The next day was spent in overhauling my chest, as the young tars termed an inspection of its contents; and I had the pleasure to find that my judgment and taste, in the purchases I had made, were universally approved of. Day after day increased the happiness I felt in my novel and respectable situation, and my gratitude to those who were, under Providence, the promoters of my good fortune.

The mess of which I was become a member consisted of eleven persons; namely, nine midshipmen of different ages, the captain's clerk, and surgeon's mate: the latter was a most curious character, a Welshman, named Jones; and reminded me, on a very short acquaintance, of Morgan in 'Roderic Random,' whom he resembled in many particulars; and I soon found that he was, like him, a kind of butt for the others to exercise their waggy upon; but in the main he was a good-hearted, inoffensive young man. The captain's clerk was a genteel youth, who had served under his present commander several years, and was in expectation of being soon promoted to the rank of purser through his interest. Of the rest, two or three were midshipmen who had also served nearly the limited term; one a master's mate, and the rest youngsters of different ages. The whole were of good families, and liberally supported by their

friends. I was called upon to subscribe my monthly quota towards the mess, which was received by one of the senior members acting as caterer ; and a plentiful sea-stock of all necessary comforts was daily accumulating, preparatory to our approaching cruise in the North Sea, to which station the *Astræa* belonged.

About a week after my joining the ship the captain came on board, received me very politely, and gave me the best advice as to my future conduct. He was an old officer, who had been at sea from his youth, possessed an excellent heart, and a most conciliating address, blended with the bluntness and unaffected good humour peculiar to seamen. He was advanced in years at the time I served under him, and I perceive by a late Navy List that his long and meritorious services have been rewarded with the post of governor of the Naval Asylum, an institution which does honour to the country and the government that established it.

CHAPTER VII.

MY RAPID PROGRESS IN NAVIGATION. BECOME A GOOD SAILOR IN THEORY. THE APPROACH OF A SEVERE WINTER SOMEWHAT DAMPS MY PLEASURE. BEGIN TO REPENT MY BARGAIN. DUTY EXCESSIVELY FATIGUING, AND SITUATION UNCOMFORTABLE. ADVISED TO ALTER MY COURSE. APPOINTED CAPTAIN'S CLERK, AND FIND MYSELF AT HOME TO A PEG. THE FRIGATE ORDERED UP THE RIVER THAMES. I VISIT LONDON. BECOME ENAMOURED OF A FAIR CYPRIAN. DESERT MY SHIP ON HER ACCOUNT.

In a few days, the frigate being completely equipped, was cast off from alongside the Carolina, and all hands being on board, we dropped down to the Nore, from whence we sailed for Yarmouth Roads, where the admiral of the North Sea fleet was then lying; soon after which we put to sea, on a cruise off the coast of Holland. I immediately applied myself assiduously to the study of navigation, in which I was so successful, that I was in a few weeks capable of keeping a dead reckoning. It was required of the midshipmen to deliver in daily, at noon, an account of the ship's course, distance, &c., performed in the last twenty-four hours. These different calculations, deduced from the remarks on the log-board, were presented to the captain, who, on a comparison of the whole, formed his opinion of the several operators' ingenuity, and praised or censured accordingly. I had the satisfaction to find that my performances were generally approved of, and gained me much applause from their

correctness. This success was probably owing to the advantages I possessed over most of my companions in point of education, improved by extensive practice in figures, and to a closeness of application arising from my experience in the world, of which they (whose acquirements were merely scholastic) were incapable. I was remarked also for the neatness and perspicuity with which I kept my log-book and journal, which I never suffered, like many others, to be in arrears. I was not quite so happy in my efforts to become a good practical sailor. I learnt indeed, with great facility, the names and uses of every rope in the ship, and could apply to them without hesitation on all occasions, and I had a correct idea of the manœuvres necessary in tacking, wearing, reefing, &c., as far as theory extended; but unhappily my constitution being naturally delicate, and my nerves uncommonly weak, I found myself much embarrassed when duty or inclination prompted me to go aloft, on which occasions I was subject to a giddiness in my head, which rendered my situation extremely perilous, and though I endeavoured by perseverance to overcome this weakness, I could never totally banish the timidity with which I was affected. On this account, though I continued indefatigable in every other point of my duty, I desisted, particularly in blowing weather, from ascending "the high and giddy mast;" and I am firmly persuaded that it is only by going to sea at a very tender age, that youth in general are rendered callous to danger, and insensible of those fears to which I was at all times more or less subject. It is also probable that the various excesses in which I had indulged since I first quitted my friends, had contributed to impair a constitution naturally fragile, and to relax still more the nervous system. Our first cruise produced no incident worth notice. We maintained our station, when the weather would permit, off the Texel, and were frequently so near the land, that we

could distinguish and count the Dutch fleet, lying at anchor in that harbour, from our mast-head: but Mynheer was not disposed to put to sea, of which event we were ordered to convey immediate intelligence to the admiral. The winter was now approaching, and there was every appearance of its proving unusually inclement. During this cruise, we lay-to for twenty-one successive days, in a tremendous gale from the N.E., with only a storm jib and fly-sail set; and although we were in no immediate danger, having good sea-room, and a tight ship, I found my ardour for a seafaring life considerably abated. I was obliged to turn out of a warm bed at twelve or four o'clock in each night to take my watch, the hardship of which duty was a severe penance upon me. The excessive cold, added to loss of rest, produced a drowsiness which rendered me incapable of resisting the inclination I felt to sleep, whenever I could retire to a private spot unobserved; which was generally in the long-boat, under a gun carriage, or some such hiding place. I was, however, frequently discovered in my retreat, by accident, or by the mischievous information of some watch-mate, whose hardy frame was proof against fatigue. On those occasions the lieutenant of the watch would order the rest of the midshipmen to throw a horse-bucket of salt water over me, which did not fail to awaken me quickly; but on starting up, shivering and amazed, I could never ascertain the perpetrators of this ablution, who having disappeared, would come up to me, very gravely condoling on my misfortune, which they stated to proceed from a grampus having blown over me from alongside. This piece of sea wit, which I soon understood, produced a general laugh at my expense; however, I was as ready at other times to practice the same exploit upon some other unlucky sleeper; and my chief consolation was, that the farce always ended with the sufferer being ordered to take off his wet clothes and turn in-

to his hammock, which sometimes saved two or three hours on deck. At other times, sleeping on our watch, or other instances of remissness in duty, were not so slightly passed over; we were sometimes sentenced to sit on the main-top-mast head, for two, four, and sometimes eight hours; at other times to sit on the weather cat-head, exposed to a cutting wind; and other similar punishments, depending on the humour or severity of the officer of the watch. In addition to the hardships and fatigues of duty, I began to find my situation in the mess grow daily more irksome. I soon perceived that a midshipman's birth (or mess room) is an epitome of the world at large, the weaker party goes to the wall, and is subject to many insults and impositions from those who are his superiors in seniority, strength, or interest. There were also frequent instances of intrigue and treachery; and, as among so many persons there must be various dispositions, there were not wanting envious and malicious minds whose delight was in fomenting mischief and detraction. Being naturally of a peaceable turn, hating nothing so much as a life of dissension, and abhorring tyranny of every description, I now wished myself emancipated from this state of bondage, as to me it seemed; and I discovered, when too late, that "all is not gold that glitters," and that the situation of a midshipman (which I had once considered the *summum bonum* of honour and happiness) was not, any more than others, wholly free from care and inquietude. However, I continued to weather the gale as well as I could; and conscious of the rectitude of my intentions, suffered patiently those little mortifications I had not power to avert.

After a cruise of two months, we returned to port, when I had the pleasure of hearing from my respected friends in S—shire. Our stay in Yarmouth roads was short; we put to sea again in company with several smaller vessels, of which our captain was com-

modore. A violent storm, however, soon dispersed our little squadron, and we at length with much difficulty gained the river Humber, from whence we returned to Yarmouth. During this winter we were continually at sea, except for very short intervals; and the oldest seamen in the ship declared they had never known a more tempestuous season. Several fine frigates, sloops, brigs, &c., were lost in the North Sea, and on the northern coasts of England. My hardships of course rather increased than diminished, and I heartily repented the step I had taken; not that I disliked the service, or the mode of living on ship-board, but I found myself unequal to the duty of watching, &c., and was also uncomfortably situated with respect to my messmates, whose manners and ideas of enjoyment did not coincide with mine. The notion of finding pleasure in books was ridiculed by them; and I was sometimes told that I ought to have been a parson; but it was agreed on all sides, that I was better adapted for a clerk than a sailor. These hints and suggestions were not thrown away upon me; I felt the force of their justice, and longed for an opportunity of ameliorating my situation, which at length, to my great joy, unexpectedly occurred.

The captain's clerk, I have before mentioned, was, by the interest of captain Dacres, promoted to the rank of purser; and as soon as this was known, my brother Mids. unanimously advised me, in the sea phrase, to "bear up," for a scribe; meaning to quit my present station, and petition the captain to receive me as his clerk. I took this advice, and was happy enough to succeed. As I had spent much of my time with my predecessor, and took pleasure in observing his various public accounts, in the execution of which I had often assisted him, I required but little instruction to enable me to undertake this office.

I must not omit to notice here a laughable incident consequent on my dereliction. The midshipmen in

general, on the day of my appointment, surrounded me in our cabin, and with great ceremony proceeded to cut off the "weekly accounts"* from the coat I had on; proclaiming, at the same time, that I had now assumed a different character, and had no further right to the honourable uniform of a Mid. I was obliged, therefore, to have this appendage taken from every coat and jacket I possessed.

Behold me now once more in my own sphere! Though I had relinquished the hope of ever becoming an admiral, yet here was another field for promotion opened for me. After a service of two years, I might obtain a purser's warrant, which, though a less honourable station than the former, is perhaps more lucrative, and certainly less exposed to danger.

I had now a commodious cabin to myself, in which I was free from interruption, only frequenting the mess cabin at meal times, or when I was inclined for company. I slept peaceably in my cot, while my former companions were exposed to the wind and weather upon deck. As to the duties of my office, they were merely a source of pleasing amusement to me; I soon became expert in their performance; and my attention gained me the esteem of both captain and purser.

It is needless to trouble the reader with a journal of the ship's proceedings during the remainder of the time I continued in her; it may suffice to state briefly, that we took many cruises in the North Sea, in the course of which we visited the Orkney Isles, Leith Roads, the river Humber, Osely Bay, Robin Hood's Bay, Harwich Harbour, and other anchorages on the

* The small square white patches on each side the collar of a midshipman's coat, having an anchor button in the middle of it, are facetiously called "weekly accounts," from their resemblance to a flag hoisted by the port admiral, requiring from the ships in the harbour a weekly return of their state and condition. This flag is blue, with a white field in the middle.

coasts of England and Scotland, to which we were driven by stress of weather or other causes. In one of our cruises we captured a beautiful French lugger privateer, of fourteen guns, and fifty-eight men, belonging to Dunkirk, after a chase of three hours, in a gale of wind, in which we went at the rate of thirteen and a half knots per hour, under a foresail and close-reefed maintop-sail only. During the ensuing summer, being appointed to convoy above three hundred sail of merchantmen to the Baltic sea, we lay for several weeks at Elsinour, in Denmark; at which place I went on shore, and had some pleasant rambles into the adjacent country, visiting Copenhagen, which is twenty miles distant. I also viewed the interior of that ancient castle celebrated by Shakespeare in the tragedy of Hamlet, and many other local curiosities.

The following spring the *Astrea* was ordered up the river Thames, for the purpose of receiving on board two hundred thousand pounds in specie, which she was to convey to Cuxhaven, for the use of the Hamburgh merchants. We accordingly came to an anchor at Greenhithe, sixteen miles from London; and while the ship was undergoing some little repairs, I obtained leave of absence for three days, of which I availed myself to visit London, with the view of having a short cruise in that region of pleasure. As I had lately received both pay and prize-money, and had also been economical of what my relations had occasionally remitted to me, I was well provided for the purpose.

On the first night of my arrival in town I went, of course, to the play, where I was struck with the appearance of a very interesting young Cyprian, whom I immediately accosted, and after the performance attended to her apartments in Bury street, St James's. Here everything was upon the most elegant scale, and I was so well pleased with my quarters, as well as

with the lady, that I did not stir tack or sheet (except on short excursions of pleasure in which she accompanied me) until the expiration of my liberty, and then it was with much reluctance I could tear myself from this fascinating fair one. I was the more charmed with her, as she exhibited a generosity of mind seldom met with in females of her description: and though she might have extracted from me my last shilling, yet she was so far from being mercenary, that my expenses, considering the enjoyments I had experienced, were comparatively trifling. I returned then to my ship in due time, but still the thoughts of the lovely miss K——e incessantly recurred, and prevented my enjoying a moment's peace. My anxiety was increased by receiving a most affectionate letter from her, within three days, according to a promise she had given me at parting, in which she earnestly requested my leave to visit me on board prior to our sailing. To this I would not, however, consent, but gave a sort of conditional promise, almost indeed amounting to a positive one, that I would see her again in town.

About a week after my return from London I resolved to pay a second visit to my innamorata; but as we were now ready for sea, and expected the specie on board every hour, it was in vain to solicit leave. I therefore determined to go ashore early, as if to spend the day, which the whole of the petty officers were allowed to do in turn. My intention was to go post to London, and, after a day and a night's pleasure, to return on board early the next morning, as I could easily frame some excuse for staying ashore all night.

From some secret presentiment, however, which I conceived at the moment I was about to step in the jolly-boat, I hurried down to my chest, and hastily filling a clothes-bag with linen, gave it to one of the boys, as if to take to the washerwoman, and imme-

diately quitted his majesty's ship *Astræa* (as the event proved) never more to return. I procured a man to carry my bag to Dartford, a post town three miles from Greenhithe, and fifteen from London, from whence I took a chaise, and in less than two hours found myself in the arms of my fair enslaver. In order to give the reader leisure to reflect on the blindness of mankind to their own welfare, and to revile me in particular, as I deserve, for this mad and unjustifiable conduct, I shall put an end to this chapter.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONSEQUENCES OF MY IMPRUDENT SECESSION.
REDUCED TO GREAT DISTRESS. BECOME A BILLIARD-PLAYER. ASSOCIATE WITH SHARPER. ENGAGE WITH A COUNTRY ATTORNEY. TAKE LEAVE OF LONDON ONCE MORE.

THE reader will here observe that I had left behind me, on my desertion, a valuable chest of clothes, books, &c. &c., the purchase of which, but sixteen months before, had cost my affectionate friends a large sum; and I had now, by this rash act, defeated their fondest hopes, and brought disgrace as well on them as on the worthy officer who procured me the appointment. It is impossible, however, for my reader to condemn my folly, or rather wickedness, in stronger terms than my own conscience has ever since done. Surely there must, let moralists argue as they will, be something like a fatality which governs the fortunes of some, if not all, men; and which impels them headlong to their ruin, against

the voice of reason and of conscience, and the dictates of common sense. But the retrospect affects me too much : I must not aggravate my present sufferings by dwelling longer on what will not bear reflection. All I can now do is to repent of all my errors ; and I trust that Divine Power will accept my repentance who best knows its sincerity.

Before I resume the thread of my narrative I will just venture to give the reader a few lines, descriptive of a midshipman's life, which will require, I trust, no apology, when I state that they were the production of some of the junior members of our mess, and composed in the space of a very few hours. Of the correctness of the picture therein drawn, I can truly say, *probatum est*.

VERSES

WRITTEN ON BOARD HIS MAJESTY'S SHIP THE ASTREA,
BY THE YOUNGER MIDSHIPMEN OF THAT FRIGATE.
1798.

I.

When in the cockpit* all was dim,
And not a Mid dar'd show his glim ; †
A youth was left alone :
He scratch'd his head ; survey'd his cloth
Then took the other cheering dose, ‡
And thus began his moan :—

II.

Ah ! cursed be that fatal day,
When I from home was led astray,
In this d——d place to dwell :

* In line-of-battle ships the midshipmen's birth, or cabin, as in the cockpit.

† Candle.

‡ A dram of rum is here meant, to a bottle of which it seems the youth was applying for consolation.

Oh! had I in the country stay'd
I might have learned some useful trade
And scorn'd the white lapelle.*

III.

When first on board the ship I went,
My belly full, my mind content,—
No sorrows touch'd my heart :
I view'd my coat, so flash and new,
My gay cockade, and hanger too,
And thought them wondrous smart.

IV.

But now, alas! my coat is rent ;
My hanger's pawn'd ; my money spent ;
My former friends I've miss'd ;
And when of hardships I complain,
My messmates swear 'tis all in vain ;
And cry, " What made you list ?"

V.

But hark ! I hear the corp'ral's tread :†
Another dose and then to bed ;
Of ev'ry joy bereft :
I shake my bottle with a doubt ;
My poor half-pint ‡ is quite drained out ;
Not one kind drop is left !

VI.

The youth with indignation burns ;
Into his hated hammock turns ;
Alas ! not long to sleep :
The quarter-master, with hoarse tongue,
Awakes him ; says, " The bell has rung :"
He's roused, his watch to keep.

* Alludin : the uniform of a lieutenant, which is faced with white.

† The ship's corporal, whose duty it is to see all lights extinguished at eight o'clock.

‡ His daily allowance of spirits.

VII.

Shiv'ring he walks the quarter-deck,
Dreading the stern lieutenant's check,
Who struts the weather-side;*
With glass and trumpet in his hand,†
He bellows forth *his* harsh command,
With arrogance and pride.

After the first transports of our meeting had subsided, it was mutually agreed that I should reside altogether with miss K——e, who, being ignorant of my real circumstances, imagined I was capable of maintaining her and myself, if not in the most splendid, at least in a comfortable manner. I should have stated, however, that the pleasure I felt at being once more free from control, and on my near approach to my favourite spot, London, added to the passion I had conceived for this young lady, had completely banished every idea of returning to my ship, long before I was set down at the obelisk in St George's fields, where I had exchanged my chaise for a hackney-coach, to prevent my being traced.

The following morning I examined into the state of my personal effects; which I found to consist of a dozen fine shirts, about the same number of neck-cloths, hose, and waistcoats, a few odd articles of other apparel, and twenty-one pounds in money, together with an old family gold watch, and the suit of blue I had on my back.

My fair acquaintance evinced some concern at the rash step I had taken; which, imputing wholly to my affection for herself, drew from her professions of gratitude and constancy, which I believe (from her youth and ingenuous mind) to have been sincere. I determined now to domesticate myself with this

* The lieutenant of the watch walks the weather-side; the midshipmen, the lee.

† Telescope and speaking-trumpet.

charming woman for a few weeks; as well to make up for the privations I had suffered for the last sixteen months, by enjoying every comfort money could procure, as to preclude any risk of being apprehended for desertion before the ship's departure.

During this retirement—which I might justly call a honeymoon, from the happiness I experienced—I obtained from miss K——e some account of herself, and the misfortunes which had reduced her to the disgraceful situation in which I found her. The following are the particulars :—

She was the second daughter of a respectable tradesman in the city, who had placed her, with her elder sister, at a boarding-school in Queen square, where she had become perfectly accomplished. About a year before our acquaintance began, she had been accidentally seen walking in the garden of the square, to which the young ladies had access, by an officer of dragoons, who, being struck with her beauty, had employed every art of bribery and intrigue, first to open a correspondence by letter, and afterwards to obtain a personal interview, of which opportunity he made such good use that he succeeded in seducing this amiable child, then just fifteen years of age, to elope from her school, to sacrifice to him honour, fortune, and parental affection, and entail on herself ruin, remorse, and endless shame!

This gallant hero treated her with the fondest attention, and spared no expense to gratify her every wish, and, by a continual round of splendid dissipation, to banish any reflections which might otherwise obtrude themselves; and in this (owing to her youth and the natural levity of her sex) he so far succeeded that she felt not, for the first six months, those compunctions, which, sooner or later, must attend conscious guilt. At the end of that time, however, her protector, being ordered abroad with his regiment, left her a slender provision in possession; but

for which he made up with the most liberal promises of future bounty. It is probable he had by this time gratified a passion which was at first but of a sensual nature; and I am led to think his going abroad was only a fiction, the better to cover his base design of deserting her: be this at it might, she had never since heard from him; and, as her little money was soon exhausted, she found herself alone and friendless, and now first began to reflect on the consequences of her imprudence. She had on quitting the school assumed the name of K——e, which I have recorded her by, in order to avoid the inquiries of her family; to whom shame and (perhaps false) delicacy, now deterred her from a thought of returning. In the late scenes of her guilty prosperity, she had formed an acquaintance with several kept women who were living, like herself, in elegant infamy. She now had recourse to some of those friends for temporary assistance; but, alas! they soon convinced her how little is to be expected from such friendship, when adversity renders it most essential. In a fatal moment she took the usual course of persons similarly situated; she procured a suitable lodging where her misfortunes were not known, and frequented the theatres and other public places; at which (being a new face on the town) she was successful above all her competitors in attracting the notice of the male sex. The pecuniary emoluments she thence derived had enabled her to live elegantly; and her person and carriage were so much above the common class of cyprians that she was still, at the time I first saw her, an object of general admiration. Fortunately also her health was yet untainted, so that, could I have found means for our mutual support, this connexion promised to be a source of happiness to us both. She felt happy at the opportunity of quitting a course of life which had always disgusted her, and little regret for the past, (being ignorant of the true state of my finances) gave when

a melancholy thought of her disconsolate family caused a temporary effusion of grief.

The first month or honeymoon of our connexion being expired, and the *Astræa* long departed from the river, I began to revolve in my mind the means of future subsistence. As I had spared no expense to render our retirement pleasing, and had purchased for myself a suit of plain clothes, I now found myself reduced to my last guinea, and I knew that unless I hit upon some mode of speedily recruiting, I must have recourse to the pawnbroker for another. These unpleasing reflections gave me much uneasiness; but I carefully concealed it from my partner, and preserved the same air of cheerfulness as before. At length came "th' inevitable hour." Money was wanting for household purposes, and I was obliged to raise a few pounds, by depositing my watch in the usual place of security. I accounted for the absence of this article by a pretence that it wanted repair. This small supply lasted but a fortnight, as we retrenched nothing of our mode of living; and I had lately accompanied my dear Sarah to the theatres and other places of diversion, for which amusement she had as violent a passion as myself. But I have now to relate an event, which no less afflicted than surprised me, and of which I had not the most distant apprehension.

One night, towards the close of the last mentioned period, we had returned late from the Opera, and being high in spirits though low in pocket, I proposed to send for a small collation from the neighbouring tavern, and to indulge in a little extra festivity; this was approved of by my charmer, who indeed had no will but mine, and our little maid having procured the necessary requisites, we enjoyed a most comfortable supper; after which we circulated the cheering glass, the wine receiving an additional zest from the wit and enlivening conversation of my fair companion. But mark the uncertainty of human happiness!

About two o'clock, as we were on the point of retiring to rest, we were surprised by a sudden and loud knock at the street door, which being unusual at so late an hour, caused a momentary alarm to us both. Before we had time to form an idea of the cause, the door of our apartment was burst rudely open and three persons entered, at the sight of whom my unfortunate girl fainted in my arms, on the sofa whereon we sat. One of the three persons, a respectable-looking elderly gentleman, from his tender anxiety, but mixed with some degree of severity, I soon conjectured to be her unhappy father; in which I was not mistaken. The other two immediately called the landlady of the house, by whose assistance they recovered the poor girl from her swoon; which having accomplished, they instantly hurried her down stairs, the old gentleman darting an angry look at me, and left me so stupified with grief and surprise, that I had not power to follow or notice their proceedings. I soon afterwards heard a coach drive from the door, on which the latter was immediately shut, and the landlady coming up, informed me of what she had gathered during a short conversation from the parties. It appeared that the young lady had been seen with me the preceeding night at the Opera-house, by a friend of her family, who knowing of her elopement, had officiously followed us home, and then immediately given information to her father, who applying instantly to sir William Ford, the Bow street magistrate, that gentleman had detached Messrs Townshend and Carpmeal (two of his principal officers) to assist him in the recovery of his lost child. This they had effected as I have described; the anxiety of her parent not suffering him to defer the business even till the ensuing day. The woman added that on learning from her the life his daughter had led for some months prior to her acquaintance with me, and that I was not her original seducer, he had declined the idea

of apprehending me, which the officers were otherwise empowered to do.

This melancholy event was a grievous affliction to me, who had relinquished an honourable situation purely on her account; and was now not only deprived of a beloved object, but reduced to a state of utter poverty. Notwithstanding every inquiry I could institute, I could never obtain any further information as to the fate of miss K——e, than what I extracted by a bribe from one of the officers, who assured me that it was her father's intention to send her to a remote part of the kingdom, where she had a female relation who had undertaken the care of her: but this man declared that the name of her parents was known only to the magistrate, which was perhaps true; and the dear girl had never disclosed her real name to myself, but had almost promised so to do on a little longer acquaintance.

I now quitted this lodging, the wearing apparel of my late companion being claimed by the landlady for some arrears of rent, (as the father had refused to take anything from the house,) and never approached it more. I engaged a small apartment for myself in a more central situation; and, to supply my immediate wants, deposited one article after another at the pawnbroker's, till I had no longer anything left to deposit.

It was necessary, however, before my appearance became too shabby, to find some means of support. As to my friends, I had given up every idea of returning to them, nor did I, for some months after this, acquaint them of the rash step I had taken; and when I afterwards did so, I amused my poor grandfather with a fictitious account of my having returned to the land, and assured him that I was doing well; for, as I have before hinted, I was so sensible of the inconvenience which that worthy man must unavoidably suffer in his old age, from his too great liberality

to me, that I determined to submit to any hardships rather than be a further incumbrance upon him.

I had during my former residence in London taken great delight in billiards, and by a frequent attendance at public tables had become a tolerable good player. I had renewed my acquaintance with this game since my last arrival in town; and, urged by necessity, I now deemed it possible to pick up a little money at one of these "boards of green cloth." For this purpose I attended daily at the rooms in Bow street, Covent garden, where, by a few days' play with the marker, I gained a knowledge of the tables; and as nothing contributes like practice to improve one at this scientific game, I was soon enabled to engage with such gentlemen as accidentally dropped in for an hour's amusement, which I obligingly afforded them at the expense of a few shillings.

These opportunities, however, only occurred in the early part of the day; for in the evenings the tables, as well as the spoil, were engrossed by a combination of five or six sharpers, who regularly attended for the same purpose as myself; but their operations were upon a more extensive scale: by forming sham matches among themselves, engaging by-standers to bet on either side, and then playing booty, and by various other expedients, they frequently obtained large sums, and were enabled to appear genteely about town. These gentry soon viewed me with a jealous eye; regarding me, I suppose, as an inter-loper, who encroached upon their rights of plunder. I therefore found it would be necessary to have an understanding with their party, by which means I should reap a much better harvest than I could do by a mere course of fair play, in which I was sometimes unavoidably beat. I at length effected my object, by means of an elderly man, whose goodnatured countenance encouraged me to introduce a conversation on the subject. This person, who was a veteran in the arts

of play, and of some consequence in the gang, seemed flattered by the respectful manner in which I addressed him, and complimenting me on the talents I possessed, assured me I should receive from himself every advice requisite to render me useful ; and that I might depend on the most equitable treatment in the division of any money I might be accessory to obtaining.

I was the same evening formally accepted as a member of this sharpening fraternity ; and after a libation at the Piazza coffee-house, they repaired to the scene of action, where I soon afterwards dropped in, as if by accident ; and having played a few games with the marker, in which I betrayed great want of skill, I was at length challenged by one of our party, who had been seen at other times to play well. Of course bets in plenty were offered against me ; and in the middle of the game, pretending to be irritated at the general discouragement of the by-standers, I affected to grow warm, and took odds of several gentlemen that I won the game, (which was now six to four against me) ; my antagonist also backed himself by laying the same odds with some other of our confederates, after which, no more bets being offered, he relaxed a little in his play. I improved in proportion, and having for form's sake suffered the game to arrive at twenty all, the flats (or strangers) began to look foolish, and endeavoured to hedge off, as the phrase is, but without effect. I therefore made a successful hazard and decided the game, to the great chagrin of those who had so warmly opposed me. The person who played with me declared I had won by mere luck and random play, and, throwing down his bets with a passionate air, swore he would play me the following day for a larger sum, and give me five points. This finesse prevented any suspicion in the minds of the losers, whom it was our interest to keep ignorant of the combination existing. The room soon

after getting thin, we departed one at a time, and meeting at the usual place, apportioned the division of the evening's profit, which amounted to about thirty pounds.

I continued to associate with this knot of gamblers for several weeks : but I soon found that our success was very uncertain, depending upon the number of strangers who happened to visit the rooms ; as those who had once been duped by us, were always cautious in future, and would neither play nor bet with us. It was only therefore from gentlemen who were not in the habit of frequenting this house that we had a chance of gaining anything worth notice ; so that upon the whole, what I acquired was barely sufficient to keep me above want. The summer, too, having now commenced, at which season there is but little company at the billiard rooms, the confederates to whom I had attached myself, left town upon a tour to the different races, some with an E O table, others trusting to their general abilities at hazard playing, cocking, &c. As I had neither found the pleasure or profit which I derived from a connection with them to afford that satisfaction I expected, I was not concerned at a separation from them. I therefore rubbed on as well as I could by myself, spending my leisure time much in my usual manner, but always taking care to preserve a genteel appearance, on which I knew every success depended.

As I was one morning reading the papers at the coffee-house where I commonly breakfasted, I met with an advertisement for a clerk to an attorney in the country. As this was a situation I had never held, and the season of the year was favourable to an excursion, I determined to offer my services, promising myself at least to derive some benefit to my health, and amusement from changing the scene ; but I had always a partiality for London, and could never wholly reconcile myself to a country life, since

I first tasted of the various pleasures with which the metropolis abounds.

I immediately applied to the advertising parties, Messrs Dalton and Edwards, in King's Bench walk, Temple, and was introduced to the latter gentleman, who informed me it was a Mr Dalton of Bury St Edmonds, who wanted a clerk capable of conducting his business. As I had acquired a greater share of experience, and a better insight of the different branches of the profession, than many others would do in a much longer course of service, I hesitated not to undertake the duties required; and, as expedition was necessary, Mr Edwards, after some few inquiries, engaged me immediately at a weekly salary of one pound, which in so cheap a part of the country, he observed, was equal to twice the sum in London. He desired me if possible to set out that very day, and writing a short letter of introduction to Mr Dalton, gave it me, together with a small sum to bear my expenses to Bury. I then took my leave, and having gained the street, I was curious to know in what terms my credentials ran. The wafer being still wet I opened the letter, in which Mr Edwards had briefly stated the agreement he had made with me, and concluded in these words: "I have every reason to believe him an expert clerk, and do not doubt but he will prove an acquisition." How far this good gentleman's prediction was verified the next chapter will disclose. I lost no time in preparing for my journey and having but few clothes to pack up, I took my departure from the Blue Boar in Bishopsgate street, at seven o'clock, P.M., and the next morning arrived at St Edmundsbury.

CHAPTER IX.

ACCOUNT OF MY SITUATION AT BURY ST EDMUNDS.
OBSTINATELY DETERMINE TO RELINQUISH IT
AND RETURN TO LONDON. DEFAUD SEVERAL
TRADESMEN. QUIT THE TOWN AND ARRIVE IN
THE METROPOLIS. OBTAIN A QUANTITY OF
WEARING APPAREL UNDER FALSE PRETENCES.

I FOUND Mr Dalton to be a gentleman of high respectability in his profession, and of the most prepossessing manners. He gave me a very kind and polite reception, and, after some conversation, conducted me himself to the best inn in the town, where he ordered that I should be entertained at his expense until I could provide myself a convenient residence. Mr Dalton had a very handsome house, and kept several servants, but, being a bachelor and a good deal from home, it was not convenient for me to reside with him. The day after my arrival, therefore, he advised me to make inquiry for board and lodging in some regular and decent family, and to consult him on the eligibility before I made any engagement. I accordingly began my inquiries, and at length found accommodation in the family of a tradesman, of whom Mr Dalton approved. Here I was to be lodged and boarded very comfortably at nine shillings per week! This charge, to me, who had been accustomed to the expenses of London, appeared moderate in the extreme: however, being willing to make the best bargain I could, I informed the good woman that as I should receive my salary quarterly from Mr Dalton, I could only undertake to

pay her at the like period, to which proposal she therefore readily consented. My motive in this proceeding was, that in case I quitted Bury before the end of the first quarter, I might decamp without coming to a settlement, and by this means have my weekly pay of twenty shillings entire for other purposes.

Having removed from the inn to my new abode, I was instructed by Mr Dalton in the nature of my employment, which was chiefly to copy or engross deeds in conveyancing, and other similar documents, peculiar to country practitioners. In a few days I had a correct idea of what was necessary to be done, and Mr Dalton perceiving I required no instruction from him, gave me sole charge of the office, which was detached from his house, and left it to my discretion as to the hours or duration of my attendance. This liberty I did not abuse, but kept everything in such exact order that I had soon the pleasure of giving him entire satisfaction.

Mr Dalton kept a gig and two blood horses : as he had a good deal of public business relating to county matters, and was one of the commissioners for the redemption of the land-tax, which sometimes obliged him to attend meetings at the several market towns round about Bury, he often took me with him in his gig, attended by his servant on horseback. On these occasions there were usually public dinners at the principal inns, provided at the expense of the county, or the persons interested. The fare was always sumptuous, and there was no stint of the best wines. At other times I was detached on horseback, accompanied by the servant as a guide, to transact business with different clients, in various parts of the county. I was not limited in my expenses, and the account I presented on my return was freely liquidated by Mr Dalton.

Upon the whole, this was one of the most agree-

able employments I ever engaged in, and had I prudently retained it for a few years, there is no doubt but I should have met with the most liberal encouragement from my employer. But my natural inconstancy still prevailed; and I had been but a few weeks at Bury, before I grew tired of the country, and thought of nothing but returning to London, with such spoil as I could obtain from the credulity of the tradesmen in the town. With this view I bespoke clothes, boots, linen, and other articles, at various shops, informing the parties that I should expect credit till the expiration of my quarter, to which, on account of the respectable gentleman I served, they readily consented. As soon as any of these goods were brought home I immediately packed them up in small portable parcels, which I sent to London by the coach, consigned to a pawnbroker with whom I was on intimate terms; desiring him to receive and keep them safe until he saw me. I also coached off, in the same clandestine manner, such of my own apparel, &c. as I had in my trunk, in which, to prevent discovery, I deposited stones or bricks to preserve its gravity. By these means I had nothing to impede my sudden departure, when rendered necessary by the arrival of the expected quarter-day.

I must here observe, to meet any surprise the reader might feel on the subject, that as I had never at this time been connected with downright thieves, so I had never yet committed an actual theft, save the embezzlement of money at Liverpool (which indeed the law has lately made a felonious taking); though I therefore scrupled not at practising a fraud, I was not yet sufficiently depraved to commit a robbery. This will account for my not robbing the premises of Mr Dalton, which at a subsequent period of my life, would have been my primary object, as I had access to every part of the house,

and have frequently viewed with longing eyes the servant cleaning a handsome service of plate in the pantry.

I had now been about two months at Bury, and had no intention of absconding till the expiration of the third, when an accidental event induced me to hasten my departure. One afternoon Mr Dalton had written several letters in the office, and the footman being elsewhere engaged, he requested me to drop them in the post-office, in my way home. I accordingly brought them out in my hand, and happening inadvertently to cast my eye on the superscriptions, I perceived that one was addressed to Mr Lyne, tailor, Cecil street, Strand, London. Being curious to know what correspondence Mr Dalton could have with a tailor, I opened this letter, and found the contents to the following effect: "Mr Lyne,—By the waggon which goes from hence on Monday next, and arrives at the Blue Boar in Bishopsgate street on Wednesday night, I shall send you a portmanteau, corded and sealed, but not locked, containing two coats, sixteen waistcoats, fourteen pair of breeches, and a suit of uniform of the City Light Horse.* Most of these articles are nearly as good as new, but as they have now become unfashionable, I desire you will dispose of them to the best advantage, on my account, and send me down by the same conveyance two suits made in the present taste," &c.

It immediately struck me, that if I took measures accordingly, I might arrive in town time enough to intercept and obtain this trunk from the inn; for which purpose I put this letter in my pocket, and the others in the post-office. The next day, happening to go into Mr Dalton's kitchen, I there saw the

* It appears from this that Mr Dalton had formerly resided in London, and been a member of that respectable corps.

portmanteau, corded up, and directed; and on questioning the servant in a careless manner about it, he informed me that he was going to carry it to the — inn the following evening, in readiness for the departure of the waggon. The same afternoon it happened (which was a most fortunate circumstance for me) that Mr Dalton again begged of me to put some letters in the post-office, which he had not done above twice or thrice since I came into his service. Looking at these letters I saw to my surprise another addressed to Mr Lyne, as before, which eagerly opening, I found was to mention something Mr Dalton said he had forgot in his letter of the preceding day. I immediately destroyed this second letter, which (had it come to hand) might have frustrated my design.

I now prepared matters for eloping, and sent off the remainder of my effects by the coach, as before: but my good fortune produced another windfall, of which I had no expectation. The day before my intended departure I was walking in the market-place with a young man, who was clerk to another attorney in the town, and the conversation turning upon watches, my companion observed, that if I wished to purchase one he would introduce me to a maker of his acquaintance, who would use me well on his account. I took him at his word, and begged he would immediately do so. We were then within a few doors of the shop, into which we entered; and I perceived over the window in large characters, "Launley and *Gudgeon*, watch-makers." I laughed inwardly at the singularity of the latter name, which I considered ominous of my success in the imposition I meant to put upon him. After a short preliminary conversation, my acquaintance having business to do took his leave, and Mr Gudgeon himself proceeded to shew me several watches. I informed him that I wished to have a good one, but my circumstances would not allow me to go to a high price. Mr Gudgeon assured me it was better to have

a good one at once, and recommended me a very handsome gilt watch, capped and jewelled, and his own make, which he said he could warrant to perform well, and for which he asked me eight guineas. I replied that, as my weekly salary from Mr Dalton was but one pound, I could not afford to give so much, and began to examine others of a cheaper kind, but still letting him see that I had a strong inclination for the one he had recommended. This induced him to repeat his praises of the latter, and to press me with greater energy to fix upon it. I at length (with a shew of much reluctance) suffered myself to be persuaded; but I begged leave to observe, that as I was influenced in everything by the advice of my good master, Mr Dalton, I would not venture to make so expensive a purchase without his approbation; that if he would therefore intrust me with the watch, I would consult Mr Dalton, and give him (Mr Gudgeon) a decisive answer the next morning: this he declared himself willing to do, on which I took both the watch and my leave together, and returned home.

The next morning I attended the office as usual, but of course took no notice to Mr Dalton of the affair in hand. During the space of time I allotted myself for dinner I again called on Mr Gudgeon, and told him that I should keep the watch, provided he would receive the payment by instalments, as I could not afford to pay the whole price at once. I therefore proposed to give him the ensuing Saturday one or two guineas, as I should find most convenient, and to pay him half-a guinea a week afterwards, until the whole was liquidated. To this he readily agreed, and having fitted a key to the watch, he begged leave to show me some chains and seals. Of the former he had none but gilt ones: I selected one of the neatest, and a handsome gold seal. I then desired to have a bill of parcels of the whole, observing that, whenever I paid a sum upon account, Mr Gudgeon could make a

memorandum of it at the bottom by way of receipt. Having obtained this, I departed, promising to be punctual in paying my first instalment on the day appointed. This took place on Tuesday, the portmanteau being now on its way to London; and the same evening I quitted my lodgings privately, leaving nothing behind but a trunk, containing brick-bats and stones, and walked by moonlight to a village four miles distant, through which the stage-coach was to pass the next morning at seven o'clock. I procured some supper at a decent public-house, and retired to rest, desiring to be called in time for the coach. At the expected hour the stage made its appearance, in which I seated myself, and about eight the same evening arrived at the Blue Boar, just two hours after the waggon, which I perceived standing in the yard.

As soon as I descended from the coach I walked into the coach-office, and inquired of the book-keeper if the Bury waggon was arrived; he replying that it was, I told him that I expected a trunk, and on my describing the direction, he looked over the way-bill, and informed me there was such an article, but the waggon would not be unladen till the next morning, when I might obtain it by application. I now retired to the Cross Keys in Gracechurch street, where I procured a bed; the next morning, having breakfasted, I repaired to the Blue Boar, where I had the pleasure of finding the waggon unloaded; and boldly entering the office, I inquired if I could have the trunk I had applied for the night before. The clerk recollecting me, searched for and found it immediately; and placing it on the counter, demanded a trifling sum for carriage. While I was joyfully opening my purse to pay this demand, the book-keeper, seeming to recollect himself, after a short apology, told me it was not customary with him to deliver goods to a stranger without he was shewn a letter or other authority to warrant

such delivery, as so many frauds had been practised upon inn-keepers of late. I affected to be a little displeased at his suspicion, but acknowledging the justice of such precautions, I assured him I had received a letter of advice from Bury, but I doubted whether I had it about me, then pulling out my pocket-book, hastily turned over a number of papers, and pretending to be a little concerned at my want of thought, informed the clerk that I had left the letter at home, and must therefore suffer him to send the trunk to Cecil street, although it would occasion an expense for portage which I intended to have saved; then repeating my vexation, and carelessly arranging the pocket-book, I inckily found the identical letter, which I had (as I pretended) overlooked in my haste. I now drew it forth in triumph, and obliquely hinting how incapable I was of a fraudulent action, was opening the letter to show him the contents; but this cautious person took me aback a second time, by observing that it was unnecessary to peruse the letter, all that he required was to see the post-mark! This was a difficulty of which I had not the least idea, and was therefore unprepared to meet it, and I have often since wondered that my confusion did not betray me; but I had sufficient presence of mind to answer with a smile that I could account for the absence of a post-mark, by informing him that I received this letter enclosed in a frank or envelope, which I had destroyed. This satisfied him, and having read a few lines of the letter he delivered the trunk, which I brought away from the inn, and having called a coach, was driven to Aldersgate street, where I was set down at the end of a narrow court or passage, leading to West Smithfield, through this court I proceeded on foot to prevent my being traced, as no person could follow me without my perceiving it. Being now out of danger, I took another coach in Smithfield, and was carried to my friend the pawnbroker's, to

whom I had consigned my effects from Bury ; but on my way I purchased a handsome large trunk, capable of containing the whole of my property, including the contents of Mr Dalton's portmanteau. The latter (on arriving at the pawnbroker's) I removed into my new trunk, and presented my friend with the portmanteau ; then arranging also the contents of my various parcels, and paying him for the carriage, &c. I left my trunk in his care until I had procured a lodging, which was the next object I had in view.

I could not help applauding myself on the dexterity with which I had accomplished this latter adventure, as well as on the general success of my expedition to Suffolk, on which I had been absent from London exactly nine weeks. And when it is considered that I was then but just turned of seventeen years old, the reader must allow that I displayed a genius and abilities which, had they been devoted to more honourable purposes, would have done me no small credit. But I am now writing my "confessions," and shall therefore not attempt to palliate my faults at the expense of my veracity.

CHAPTER X.

LIVE DAILY FOR A FEW WEEKS ON THE SPOILS
OF MY LATE EXCURSION. AGAIN OBLIGED TO
SEEK EMPLOYMENT. ENGAGE WITH A CONVEY-
ANCER IN THE TEMPLE. APPREHENDED BY
MY LATE MASTER. COMPROMISE THE AFFAIR
THROUGH THE FRIENDSHIP OF A RELATION.

I WENT immediately in quest of a lodging, and found one to my mind in Roll's buildings, Fetter lane ; but

as this was a respectable house, the landlady required a reference to character before she would admit me as a lodger. I therefore gave her the address of my friend and relation Mr Presland, whom I formerly served in Lincoln's inn. That gentleman having satisfied her inquiries, I removed my baggage from the pawnbroker's, and took possession of my new apartment.

The next day I examined the contents of Mr Dalton's portmanteau, and found the whole of the articles to be, as he had described them, nearly new, and all excellent in their kind. As I was not at this time acquainted with a *fence*,* to whom I could dispose of this property, I had no other means of turning them into money than by pledging them at different pawnbrokers, which I did, one or two at a time, for as much as I could get, taking out with me every morning three or four articles in a bundle, so that in a few days I had obtained money for the whole.

I had now a good stock of clothes of my own, a handsome watch in my pocket, and some pounds in money, exclusive of the daily supplies I derived from pledging Mr Dalton's apparel: I therefore began to enjoy myself in the course of life in which I always found the greatest satisfaction: breakfasting at a coffee-house, dining at a tavern, and taking my tea in the neighbourhood of the theatres, to one of which I went almost every night. In the intervals of these occupations, I amused myself in walking about town, or viewing public exhibitions, but chiefly in reading books of entertainment and instruction, to purchase which, especially periodical works, I every day devoted a small sum; so that upon the whole, though I obtained my money by dishonourable means, yet the manner in which I spent my life was harmless to myself; nor did I ever, in the most vicious part of my

* Receiver of stolen goods. (Cont.)

subsequent career, give myself up to debauchery or intoxication, the idea of which always disgusted me.

In this manner, I lived happily for about five or six weeks, when finding my ready money nearly exhausted, I judged it expedient to look out for some employment which might contribute to my support. I therefore made enquiry among the law offices, and was referred to Mr Preston, an eminent conveyancer in King's Bench walk, who engaged me as a transcribing clerk at a guinea a week. I attended the office from ten till five daily, and spent my evenings in rational recreation. I must here observe that the office of Mr Preston was within two doors of the chambers of Messrs Dalton and Edwards, the latter of whom had engaged me for the Bury expedition; and it was certainly an act of impolicy in me to accept a situation so immediately contiguous, after the manner in which I had behaved to Mr Dalton, as it was highly probable the latter would write to Mr Edwards, and desire him to use means for my apprehension. However, this never once struck me, or if it did, I thought it possible that I might, in a place so constantly thronged with passengers, go and come unobserved by him a thousand times. In addition to this, I had never been seen by Mr Edwards but in that one interview, which lasted but half an hour; and I had assumed on that occasion the name of Smith, whereas I had now resumed my own. But fate had decreed that I should suffer for my want of caution; and thus it happened:—

In going to and from the office of Mr Preston, I passed commonly four times a day by the chambers of Dalton and Edwards, but the avenue in front of the latter being very extensive, I always contrived to give them a wide birth, as the sailors term it, and their chambers being on the first floor, it was not likely I should be observed, who was so much below them, and surrounded by numbers of persons continually

passing. It happened, however, that my way to and from the office lay through a narrow passage called Mitre court, leading into Fleet street. In this passage I frequently encountered a young man having the appearance of a lawyer's clerk, whose face I thought I was familiar with; and he, on his part, always looked earnestly at me. As this was by no means uncommon amongst young men similarly employed, I concluded he had known me by sight, during my service in a former office, and therefore paid no attention to the circumstance.

One morning, about nine weeks after my return from Bury, I entered the office at the usual hour, and I had scarcely taken my seat at the desk, when Mr Preston opening the door of his own apartment, which was immediately adjoining that in which the clerks wrote, desired me to step into his room, which I should not have thought extraordinary, had not he at the same moment placed himself between me and the outer door leading to the street, and made a motion with his hand for me to walk in first; I had therefore no alternative, but entered the room. Mr Preston followed, and immediately shutting the door locked it after him; upon which I turned my head, and saw, to my no small surprise and confusion, Mr Dalton himself from Bury St Edmund's. That gentleman advanced towards me, and began to reproach me in strong terms for my misconduct; then seeing the chain of my watch hanging out, he immediately drew it from my fob, saying that he should restore it to the person whom I had defrauded of it. He next desired to know what I had done with his trunk of clothes: at first I maintained a sullen silence, and then denied any knowledge of his meaning: upon which he assured me that he had strong proofs; that if I did not restore them he would prosecute, and transport me at the least; but that it was probable I should be hanged for forging a post-mark to the letter; for that

the book-keeper at the Blue Boar would swear to my person, and that I had shewn him a post-mark which induced him to deliver the portmanteau. I smiled at the latter part of this threat, knowing the law too well to be intimidated by it; but upon Mr Dalton observing that he knew where I lodged, and doubted not of finding traces of the property on searching my apartment, I gave myself up for lost, as I had imprudently preserved all the duplicates of the articles pledged, which were now deposited in my bureau. I, however, continued mute, and Mr Dalton requested Mr Preston to send one of his clerks for a constable; on the arrival of whom he gave me in charge, and accompanied by both gentlemen I walked to my lodgings, the young man I formerly mentioned (who proved to be a clerk to Messrs Dalton and Edwards, and who, as well as Mr Edwards, were also sent for by Mr Preston) leading the way.

I afterwards ascertained that Mr Dalton having on my elopement come to a knowledge of the frauds I had practised on the Bury tradesmen, and by some accident found out that his trunk had not been received by Mr Lyne, had written to Mr Edwards an account of the whole, and that his clerk having recollected my person, had watched me home a few days before; and Mr Dalton having then been summoned to town, had arrived that very morning, and proceeded to apprehend me.

Having entered my apartment, Mr Dalton demanded my keys, which, as I found it useless longer to dissimulate, I gave up, and my drawers being searched, the unluckily duplicates were immediately found, and in my trunk two or three articles of apparel, which I had intended to have had altered for my own wear, and which Mr Dalton identified. I therefore confessed the truth, and that those duplicates would lead to the recovery of all the property, except the uniform, which I had sold to a Jew, (in

the street I said, but this was because I would not implicate the man, who kept a respectable sale-shop near Covent garden) and the portmanteau itself, which I told him I had destroyed. Mr Dalton had now some conversation with the constable apart, the result of which was, that the latter was ordered to retain me in custody; and this officer pretending to pity my youth, and to wish, if possible, that the affair might be compromised without public disgrace, offered to confine me in his own house, which was in Chancery lane, till Mr Dalton had considered further on the subject. This having been agreed to, I accompanied the constable to his house, where I had an apartment assigned me, and was left (like captain Macheath) to my private meditations; these, it may be conjectured, were not the most agreeable, as this was the first time of my ever being in "durance vile."

I heard no more of Mr Dalton till the next morning, when I was not a little surprised to see him accompanied by my friend Mr Presland. It seems that the former, prior to his apprehending me, had an interview with my landlady in Roll's buildings, and had learnt from her that she had obtained a character of me from the latter gentlemen on my taking her apartments. Mr Dalton in consequence, after consigning me to the constable's care, had waited on Mr Presland, and informed him of the disgraceful situation in which I was then placed. The result of their interview was the visit I am now going to describe. Mr Presland, after expressing his concern at the state in which he saw me, and his anxious wish to save me from the disgrace of a public prosecution, inquired if I could undertake to recover the whole of Mr Dalton's property, in case I was furnished with pecuniary means; on my answering in the affirmative, (with the exceptions before mentioned) this truly generous friend told me that Mr Dalton had consented to forego a prosecution, provided he had his property

restored, and was reimbursed the expenses of his journey to London and back again; and that, from motives of regard for the credit of our family, he, Mr Presland, had agreed to disburse a sum of money adequate to the occasion, and would trust to the chance of being repaid by my relations at some future period, when he had broke the matter to them in as delicate a manner as possible. He added, that he trusted my future conduct would never again place me in so perilous and dishonourable a situation. I of course expressed the most heartfelt gratitude for such an act of unmerited generosity, and it was settled that the constable should immediately attend me to the different pawnbrokers at which the articles were pledged, for the purpose of redeeming them. I was accordingly supplied with money by Mr Presland, and having received the duplicates, we set out on our expedition. As I had pledged the property in various parts of the town, and some of them very remote, this task occupied three whole days, during which time I died and lodged at the constable's house, my kind relation having become responsible for every expense. The whole of the articles pledged having been redeemed, were restored to Mr Dalton, and Mr Presland indemnified that gentleman for those which were irrecoverable. The aggregate of the expense incurred on this occasion, including principal and interest to the pawnbrokers, expenses to Mr Dalton, and compensation to the constable for his attendance, amounted to upwards of thirty pounds. Everything being finally settled, I was seriously admonished by Mr Presland, who, on my enlargement from custody, presented me with five guineas, and made me promise that I would immediately set out for S——shire, and endeavour to obtain an appointment in the country; being much afraid, he said, that if I continued in town, my total ruin would be the inevitable consequence.

CHAPTER XI.

OBTAIN AN EMPLOYMENT AS CLERK AND SHOPMAN.
ROB MY EMPLOYERS, AND EMBEZZLE SEVERAL
SUMS OF MONEY. QUIT THIS SERVICE, AND AM
SOON AFTER TAKEN IN CUSTODY, AND COMMITTED
TO THE BASTILLE.*

NOTWITHSTANDING the promise I had given Mr Presland, I could not reconcile myself to the S—shire journey; the shame I felt at having quitted my honourable station in the navy, as well as some other reasons, and perhaps, above all, the unavoidable destiny which awaited me, concurred to prevent my taking the salutary advice of my worthy and respected friend. Having, therefore, privately changed my place of abode, I began to consider how I should procure another employment in town, and for this purpose I carefully examined the advertisements in the daily papers, my intention being now to enter into a mercantile clerkship, or to engage as assistant in a retail shop, hoping thereby (with shame I confess it) to have a better opportunity of realizing money by fraud or robbery, than I could expect in the restricted capacity of an attorney's clerk.

At length I met with an advertisement, stating that a young man who had a general knowledge of business was wanted in a retail shop, but particularly requiring an undeniable character for honesty, &c. This latter clause seemed to promise some difficulty,

* The cant name for the House of Correction in Cold-bath fields.

as I knew not where to give a reference, except among the lawyers, and I was fearful that I should not be approved of, if it was known that I had been chiefly employed in that profession. However, as I knew myself to have a talent for business, and that I should soon acquire an insight, let the branch be what it would, I determined to have recourse to stratagem to surmount the obstacle of a recommendation.

I therefore obtained a reference to the advertiser, Mr Giffard, who kept a large masquerade and habit warehouse in Tavistock street. This person, who was a grave elderly man, inquired in what capacity, and with whom I had been last employed: being prepared for this question, I answered that I had lived for the last two years with Mr Drake, a general shop-keeper in High street, Portsmouth; and that, in consequence of a family misfortune, my late master had declined business, and retired upon his means: that this was the only cause of my being out of employment, and that Mr Drake had promised to answer any gentleman who might refer to him as to my abilities and moral character. I added, that having formerly lived in London with my parents, I had still a sufficient knowledge of the town to render myself useful to my employer. After a few more questions, which I answered with becoming modesty and propriety, Mr Giffard told me he liked my appearance well, that he would write that evening to Mr Drake, and ordered that I should call again in two days' time, when, if he approved of the answer he received, he would immediately engage me.

Having proceeded thus far before the wind, I had now to take measures for bringing my plot to a happy conclusion. My next object was to obtain possession of Mr Giffard's letter, in order that I might answer it myself, Mr Drake being a person who existed only in my inventive brain: this I accomplished in the following manner. I found out the guard of the

Portsmouth mail-coach, who was to quit London that evening and return to town the next day but one. I obtained the ear of this man, by inviting him to partake of some brandy and water, and then introduced my business by acquainting him that my name was Drake, that I had lately resided in Portsmouth, and that I had reason to suppose there were one or more letters lying at the post-office in that town for me, as I knew no such person was now to be found in High street; I therefore requested that he would, on his arrival, make inquiry for such letters, and bring any he might find safe to me on his return, promising a gratification for his trouble: this commission he readily undertook, and we then separated.

On the day appointed I met my trusty agent, who delivered me the expected letter, for which I amply rewarded him. On perusing this epistle, it was such as might be expected on the like occasion; Mr Giffard concluding his inquiries with wishing to know if the applicant, John Smith (which name I had now assumed), was in every respect fit to be received into a respectable house. I had now half accomplished the business, and it only remained to return a suitable answer through the regular channel; but to save appearances, and gain time, I waited immediately on Mr Giffard, desiring to know if he had received a reply from Mr Drake. On his answering in the negative, I expressed much surprise, but accounted for it by informing him that Mr Drake was probably absent from home, on a visit to some relations a few miles distant, and that on his return he would not fail to transmit an answer. Having thus satisfied Mr Giffard, I departed, promising to wait on him every day until the expected letter arrived.

I now applied myself to frame an answer, which I at length completed to my satisfaction, having disguised my hand-writing as much as possible. In this letter, I made Mr Drake apologize for his delay, by stating

that he was from home when Mr Giffard's favour arrived, and had taken up his pen the moment it came to hand, to answer his inquiries; that he felt happy at hearing the young man was likely to obtain so respectable a situation, and it gave him the highest gratification to bear testimony to his exemplary conduct on all occasions while he had been in his service; that his abilities were such as could not fail to render him an acquisition; and that he should not himself have parted with him on any account, had he not, for private reasons, declined business. Finally, Mr Drake declared himself glad that I had so soon met with a situation, as London was a bad place for a young person to be long out of employment, &c.

Having finished this epistle, and directed it in due form, I hastened to find out the driver of the mail-coach, as I did not choose to employ the guard on this occasion. I requested the coachman to take this letter to Portsmouth, and on his arrival to drop it in the post-office, giving some fictitious reason, which fully satisfied him when backed by a small compliment in silver.

I continued to call every morning on Mr Giffard, and expressed such well-feigned sorrow at Mr Drake's delay, that I really believe the former would in a few days more have taken me without the required testimonials. However, the long-expected answer at length arrived; and on my calling as usual, Mr Giffard told me with great marks of pleasure that he had just received a letter from Mr Drake, who gave me so excellent a character that I might come that very day if I was prepared. Mr Giffard further informed me that he was on the point himself of leaving the business to the management of his two partners (Fisher and Pettit), and should retire to a country-house he possessed at Hammersmith: that as one of these partners only resided in the house, and he was a bachelor, it would be necessary that I should board

myself, for which expense I should be allowed fifteen shillings a week, and for my services twelve more. Though this allowance was comparatively trifling, I agreed to the terms, as my only intention was to purloin all I could lay my hands on, and in two or three months to abscond and change the scene of action. As to my duty, it was to attend the shop, to make out bills of parcels, keep a set of books, and occasionally to carry out light packages.

I immediately brought my trunk of clothes, &c., to the house, and had a small bureau-bedstead assigned me in a little room behind the shop; in which room during the day a number of young women were employed in making up fancy habits, character dresses, dominos, &c. In a few days Mr Giffard, with his family, left the house, and there only remained Mr Pettit, the junior partner, myself, and a woman servant. The second partner (Fisher) was a tailor, who superintended thirty or forty men, constantly employed in a large workshop on the attic story in making gentlemen's clothes and ladies' riding-habits. The staircase to the upper apartments communicated with the shop, and had a door at the bottom, which, when Mr Pettit and the servant were gone to bed, I could fasten with a bolt, so as to leave me at liberty to range the shop, and examine every part of its contents. Of this opportunity I soon availed myself, and the keys of the various drawers, &c. being left below, I proceeded to reconnoitre the different articles they contained.

I found these to consist of black and white lace, of various breadths and descriptions; ribands, silk, and other haberdashery; a large quantity of mode, Persians, gauze, muslin, &c. &c. There were also masks and dominos of every kind, for the purpose of hire on masquerade nights; but these articles were of no value to me. As to the cloths, and other materials for gentlemen's clothes, these were always sent for,

together with the requisite trimmings, from various shops in the neighbourhood, at which tailors are supplied with such goods as they have need of them ; and it frequently fell to my lot to fetch these articles, on which occasion I had only to take the pattern-books and point out the quantities of each kind wanted, when (after it was known that I lived with Giffard and Co.) the same was immediately measured, booked, and given to me.

Having found out a Jew salesman, resident in the neighbourhood, who agreed to purchase whatever goods I brought to him, I began my depredations by taking a piece of elegant black mode, and several cards of lace, which articles I concealed in my bedstead, until I went out to breakfast the ensuing morning, when (this being the winter season) I buttoned them up under my great coat so as not to be perceived. On going to the Jew receiver, this conscientious Israelite, who no doubt suspected how I had obtained these articles, and my ignorance of their real value, offered me a guinea for each card of lace, (containing above twenty yards,) which was probably about the selling price of a single yard ; and an equally equitable price for the mode ; protesting, " as he was an honest man, and *hoped for shalvation,*" that he could not afford sixpence more. As I had no alternative, I was obliged to accept the proffered sum, and promised to let him have more goods of the same kind at every opportunity. I continued this course of pillage for several weeks, taking care however not to meddle too freely with any one species of property, so as to cause a discovery. As to money, I had not the means of getting any, for there was very little retail trade in this shop ; and that little was confined to a few persons of fashion, who came in their carriages, who were always waited on by Mr Pettit ; besides, this class of persons seldom pay ready money for the articles they select, but have them

booked. The various goods I have mentioned were chiefly kept for the purpose of making-up and ornamenting the masquerade and fancy dresses, which were from time to time bespoke for extraordinary occasions.

I was frequently sent home with a suit of clothes, a lady's habit, and other articles, to the houses of regular customers; most of whom kept an account, which was settled once a-year: but on many occasions I was desired by the parties to give a receipt and take the amount of the goods delivered. After being about two months with Messrs Giffard and Co. I began to form the design of quitting their service, and from that moment I suppressed all such sums as I received, booking the articles on my return, for the satisfaction of Mr Pettit, who conducted this department. I now bespoke a very large chest of a neighbouring carpenter, for the purpose of depositing my own clothes and other effects, which I knew must be removed by degrees from the house; and that whenever I absconded, I must leave my trunk behind me. I therefore had recourse to the old stratagem of substituting brickbats for the articles I took away, to prevent any suspicion from its lightness. When my chest was completed, I ordered it to be sent home to a lodging I had provided in a distant part of the town, of which I had obtained the key, and paid rent in advance. I removed my effects at every opportunity from Tavistock street, to this new receptacle. Everything being in readiness for an elopement, I prepared to execute my last design upon my present employers. I have before observed that I kept a set of books, in which were the accounts of many persons of fashion, for clothes, &c. My intention was to transcribe from the ledger a number of these accounts upon the copper-plate bills of parcels, which I had in my desk, belonging to the firm, and to present these bills for payment immediately after I quitted the house: not

doubting but many of the parties would pay them on the first application, by which I hoped to realize a good round sum. But circumstances not favouring this part of my design, I had only an opportunity of transcribing five or six persons' bills before Saturday night, at which period the books were delivered up to Mr Pettit, who uniformly retained them until Monday morning; and, as I had reason to fear my repeated depredations on the shop would soon excite suspicion, I had pre-determined to quit on the day last mentioned.

The last commission I received on the Saturday was to take a parcel, containing a riding-habit, to the Bell and Crown inn, Holborn, where I was to see it booked for the Clapham stage, at which place the lady resided for whom it was made. As I was going along, it occurred to me that I might as well embezzle this article, the price of which to the lady was 5*l.* 15*s.* 6*d.* Instead therefore of going to the Bell and Crown, I took it to my old acquaintance the Jew, who I expected would give me at least two guineas for it; but he had the conscience to offer me one pound, which I considered so unfair a price that I refused to let him have it, and, leaving his shop, I proceeded to a pawnbroker's a few doors further, where I requested two guineas upon it; but the shopman assured me these articles were so liable to the caprice of the fashion, that it might scarce be saleable at all in a year's time, except to convert to some other use; he therefore offered to lend me thirty shillings, which I accepted, to save further trouble. This was the most imprudent act I could have been guilty of, as this pawnbroker's was in Drury lane, and within a minute's walk of my employer's; and I had better have taken ten shillings from the Jew, where it would have been placed beyond the reach of discovery, than have pledged it for five times the sum

The consequence of this imprudence will be seen by-and-bye.

On my return to Tavistock street, I informed Mr Pettit that I had seen the parcel safely booked. The same night, after he had retired to bed, I selected a few of the most eligible articles in the shop as my farewell adventure, which I concealed in my bed till the next morning, Sunday, when I conveyed them to the usual place of disposal.

Monday being come, I attended in the shop till the hour of breakfast, when I went out as usual, but with no intention of returning. I had previously procured several patterns of fancy quilting for waistcoats, and of the most fashionable articles for breeches; with these I immediately went to the houses at which we were usually furnished with such goods, and shewing my patterns (my person being well known) I was immediately supplied with what I asked for, and the articles booked to Messrs Giffard and Co. I proceeded in like manner to a woollen-draper's, where I obtained a few yards of superfine cloth; and afterwards to a trimming and button warehouse, at which I procured suitable materials for making up the whole, as I intended these articles for my own wear. All this was executed within the hour I usually allotted for breakfast.

I next visited my lodging, and, depositing my newly-acquired property in my chest, informed the landlady I should come to sleep in the apartment that night. Having taken some breakfast, I hastened to present my bills at the west end of the town, and was so fortunate as to receive about twenty pounds, besides an order at another house to call again the next day, which, as I had no immediate danger to apprehend, I, in fact, did, and received a few pounds more. For the whole of these sums I gave receipts on account of Messrs Giffard and Co.

Thus ended my engagement with Mr Giffard, after

a duration of about ten weeks. I was now possessed of a pretty good stock of clothes, and about sixty pounds in money. I had lived well during the whole period of my service ; and I now determined to enjoy every amusement the town afforded, as I had lately been debarred from attending the theatres, &c. on account of my being restricted to early hours.

About a fortnight after my quitting Tavistock street, I called at the pawnbroker's, at which I had pledged the riding-habit, for the purpose of buying some fancy silk handkerchiefs, of which they had a very extensive assortment, being unredeemed pledges. On entering the shop, I found it very full of people (this being on Saturday evening) and the shopman desired I would wait a short time, and he would then attend to me. In a few minutes I heard the latter desire an apprentice to take a bag and go to a neighbouring liquor shop, for the purpose of procuring ten pounds worth of silver. I thought I perceived something significant in the shopman's manner of giving these directions, but as nothing is more common than such a proceeding on a Saturday night, when the pawnbrokers have need of a great deal of change, I had no apprehension of any deceit. When I began to grow impatient, the young man at length sent a boy up stairs to bring down the handkerchiefs for my inspection ; finding however that he was in no hurry to descend with them, and conceiving at last that I was only kept in suspense for some sinister purpose, I declared that I would wait no longer, but call again another time. Turning about to leave the shop, who should I encounter at the door, to my great confusion, but my late master, Mr Pettit, accompanied by a Bow street officer, and the boy who had pretended to go out for the silver. I attempted to rush by them, but was overpowered and secured. The officer immediately proceeded to secure me, but found nothing of a suspicious nature : he took however some loose

money, and every other article I had about me: luckily I had some money (the bulk of my fortune) in a private pocket, which he did not discover. Mr Pettit then asked the pawnbroker if I was the person who had pledged the habit, and on his answering in the affirmative, I was given in charge to the officer, who conducted me to Covent garden watch-house, where I was to remain locked up until the magistrate sat in the evening, at the public office, Bow street.

Shortly after my confinement, I received a visit from Mr Pettit, who, after expatiating on the enormity of my conduct, told me he had detected the frauds I had practised at the neighbouring shops, and demanded what I had done with the property so obtained. This however I refused to tell, not supposing that he had any idea of my place of abode: but in this I found myself unhappily mistaken, for he informed me that he had discovered it by means of the porter employed to carry home my chest, who, it seems, was well acquainted with Mr Pettit, and had seen me frequently in his shop. On receiving this unwelcome information, I told Mr Pettit to take what steps he pleased; and refused to answer any interrogatories, which I knew would avail me nothing, without a full restitution, which I was unable to make.

About six o'clock I was taken before the sitting magistrate, and Mr Pettit, being duly sworn, related the whole story of the riding-habit, and stated that a few days after my elopement, he was surprised at receiving a message from the lady, respecting the delay in sending it home; and having inquired at the office of the inn, he was assured that no such parcel had been booked or brought there; that having reason, from my sudden disappearance, to suspect my honesty, he had made enquiry at the surrounding pawnbrokers, and had found the habit pledged at the shop of Mr Lane, in Drury lane, who, on his application, had immediately restored it. The shopman of Mr Lane

deposed, that he had taken in the article of me, and the magistrate observed that the evidence was so clear, that nothing now remained but for Mr Pettit to produce and identify the property. The latter replied that he had it not in his possession, having sent it home to the lady, who was urgent to receive it. At this the magistrate expressed great displeasure, informing the prosecutor that all he had said was to no purpose, without the property being produced, and that he was therefore not warranted in committing me. Then turning to me, he said, "Young man, you have had a very narrow escape; I hope this will be a warning to you in future. Officer, let the prisoner be discharged." My joy at this deliverance was but momentary, for before I could reach the door of the office, Mr Pettit acquainted the magistrate, that he had several other charges of fraud against me, but the parties were not then in attendance; upon which his worship ordered me to be detained, and directing that the witnesses should attend on that day week, ordered my mittimus to be made out, and committed me to the house of correction for another examination.

CHAPTER XII.

FULLY COMMITTED FOR TRIAL. ACQUITTED FOR WANT OF EVIDENCE. FATAL CONSEQUENCES OF CONSIGNING A YOUNG PERSON TO A JAIL. MEET WITH A FELLOW PRISONER, WHO INTRODUCES ME TO THE COMPANY OF PROFESSED THIEVES. LIVE BY FRAUD AND ROBBERY. TRIP TO STAINES. AM AT LENGTH APPREHENDED FOR WHAT I AM INNOCENT OF.

On entering the gates of the gloomy receptacle to which I was now consigned, and which on many accounts has not been unaptly named the Bastille, the sensations I felt may be more easily conceived than described. Besides that this was the first prison I had ever entered, everything around me had an air of unspeakable horror. After being viewed and reviewed by the surly Cerberuses of this earthly hell, I was conducted up some stairs to a long gallery, or passage, six feet wide, having on either side a number of dismal cells, each about six feet by nine, formed entirely of stone, but having a small grated window near the roof, at the further end, which admitted a gloomy light, and overlooked a yard, in which other prisoners were confined ; there was also a similar grate over the door ; but, owing to their height, both these apertures were very difficult of access. The cells on the other side the passage were exactly similar, but overlooking another yard, and the doors were immediately opposite each other. The only furniture of these dreary apartments was an iron bedstead, on which were a bed, blanket, and rug, but all of the coarsest

kind. I afterwards found, that by paying an extravagant price, I might have had better accommodation; but as I had then only a few days to stop, and I found no want of cleanliness in my present lodging, I declined the favour. My conductor having given me a pitcher of water, without vouchsafing a word, locked the door, and left me in utter darkness. I retired to my homely couch, and having well refreshed myself before I left the Brown Bear,* I soon forgot my misfortunes in the arms of Morpheus, and did not awake till I was roused by the turnkey, at a late hour in the morning. This personage now behaved with some little civility, and let me know that if I had any money I might be supplied with a good breakfast; at the same time tossing upon my bed a small loaf (about fourteen ounces) of bread, which he told me was the daily allowance of the prison. I gladly accepted his offer, and desired to have some tea, which was presently sent up to me; and I continued to have three tolerable good meals (at least in quantity) every day during my stay here; but I paid for each on delivery, and through the nose.

In order to amuse my mind during this solitary week, I climbed up to the grated aperture over the door of my cell, and listened to the conversation of the neighbouring prisoners, who were also confined for re-examination; and from their discourse I acquired a more extensive knowledge of the various modes of fraud and robbery, which I now found were reduced to a regular system, than I should have done in seven years, had I continued at large. I was indeed astonished at what I heard, and I clearly perceived that, instead of expressing contrition for their

* A public-house near the police-office, where prisoners are confined until their removal to prison by the officers, who seldom hurry a *gentleman*, if he behaves like one, as their phrase is.

offences, their only consideration was how to proceed with more safety, but increased vigour, in their future depredations. And here I was struck with the fallacious notions entertained by the projectors of this prison, which was reputed to be upon the plan of the benevolent and immortal Howard, who had recommended the confinement of offenders in separate cells, in order to prevent the effects of evil communication among persons who had not all attained an equal degree of depravity. This object, however, was not effected here, for being within hearing of each other, they could, by sitting up over the door as I have described, converse each with his opposite neighbour, and even form a line of communication, where the discourse became general, from one end of the gallery to the other. As a proof of what I have advanced, I knew several of the prisoners then confined with me in this passage, who were at that time but striplings, and novices in villany, and who after several years' continuance in their evil courses, at length became notorious offenders, and having narrowly escaped a shameful death, are now prisoners for life in this colony.

On the morning of the appointed day, I was again taken to Bow street, where I found in attendance Mr Pettit, and the three shop-keepers from whom I had obtained the goods. I also saw, to my mortification, that they had searched my lodging, and had actually the various articles so obtained in their custody, ready to produce. The first person who came forward was the woollen-draper's shopman, who, producing some yards of cloth and kerseymere, deposed that I had applied for such articles in the name of Messrs Giffard and Co. and that having frequently served me with the like goods, he delivered them to me without hesitation. Mr Pettit then denying that I had been deputed by him, or his partner, and the property being sworn to, the magistrate observed that

There was sufficient matter to convict me, and it was therefore unnecessary to bind over the other tradesmen, who were ordered to retain their goods. Having nothing to offer in my defence, his worship ordered the clerk to commit me for trial, on which I earnestly begged the magistrate to send me to some other prison, where my friends might have access to me, (this being denied at the Bastille à la mode de Paris,) and in compliance with my request, I was ordered to New Prison, Clerkenwell; at which I was much rejoiced.

On arriving at this prison, of the rules of which I had acquired some idea from the information of my late fellow prisoners, who had indeed advised me to petition as I did, I desired to have the best accommodation I could, and was therefore called upon to pay fees, garnish, &c. together with two shillings for a bed the first night, but after that, one shilling only. Having complied with every demand, I was introduced to a little room adjoining the turnkey's lodge, where I found several persons in my own predicament, and some others who were confined for certain periods. We spent the day together in this part of the prison, having also free access to the lodge, in which we walked for air, and at night were locked up in different rooms above stairs, each containing two or three tolerable beds; so that, having society both night and day, I felt less melancholy than I had done in the house of correction. My first care was to send for a young man, who, being reputed honest by the world, I thought I could intrust to arrange matters at my lodgings, and take care of the effects I left in my apartment. I requested him to pay the rent due, and remove my chest to his own residence, supplying me occasionally with such articles as I might need. On his return, he informed me that he had done everything for the best; but, from his report, I found that twenty guineas in money, and many of my best clothes, had taken flight. This he attributed to the

officers, who, he said, had paid several visits to the chest, on pretence of searching by authority. As I knew how fruitless any complaint would be, I was obliged to submit to these losses, and thought myself very fortunate in having thirty pounds about me on my apprehension, which escaped the fangs of the officer who searched me.

It was about the middle of April when I was taken up, and this being what is termed long vacation, I had nearly seven weeks to lie in jail, before the sessions came on. This time I passed in the most agreeable manner I could, reading sometimes books and newspapers, at others, smoking, drinking, and conversing with my fellow-prisoners; having all plenty of money, we formed a pretty respectable mess, and lived on the most sociable terms. Our society was increased by several new chums before the sessions, and as these persons were some degrees above the common class of thieves, I found much satisfaction in their conversation. There were indeed among them some of the first characters upon the town, leading men in the various branches of prigg^{*} they professed; both toby-gills[†], buz-gloaks[‡], cracksmen[§], &c. but from their good address and respectable appearance, nobody would suspect their real vocation. As for the unfortunate prisoners who had no money to pay for indulgence, they were confined in a large yard, called the common side, where they were indeed exposed to "variety of wretchedness." The part I inhabited was termed "between gates," being that space which is between the outer-gate of the prison, and the gate leading to the common side.

My knowledge of life, as it is termed by the knavish part of mankind, and my acquaintance with family people^{||}, every day increased; but, as all who heard

* Thieving.

† Highwaymen.

‡ Pickpockets.

§ Housebreakers.

|| Persons living by fraud and depredation.

my case concurred with myself in opinion that I had no chance of escaping conviction, I did not form any intimacy, or devise any plans beyond the present moment, concluding that I should, at least, be confined for two years, if not transported for seven.

A week before the Old Bailey sessions, the prisoners were as usual removed to Newgate ; but to my surprise, I was not included in their number ; and I found that, my offence being considered a misdemeanour, I was to be tried at the quarter sessions held at Hicks's hall. For the reason before mentioned, I had been advised not to employ a counsel, which indeed I conceived would be only money thrown away, as the case was too clear against me. I therefore patiently awaited the issue, and the day of trial being come, I was taken, with many other prisoners of both sexes, from the prison to the sessions house on Clerkenwell green, at which Mr Mainwaring, the member for Middlesex, has for many years presided as chairman.

Being put to the bar, I stood indicted for knowingly and designedly, and by false pretences, obtaining from Joseph Addington, five yards of superfine blue cloth, and three yards of black kerseymere, &c. Having pleaded "Not guilty," the first witness called was Henry York, shopmen to the prosecutor, who deposed, that on the 7th of April, I came to his master's shop, and said I wanted the articles mentioned in the indictment ; and that he, the witness, knowing me well by sight, as the servant of Messrs Giffard and Co. and taking for granted that I was still in their service, immediately cut off and delivered the same to me. Here the chairman pressed the witness repeatedly, to state the exact words that I used ; but the man was so evidently embarrassed, (I supposed from his never being before in a court of justice,) that nothing more could be extracted from him ; he would persist in speaking only in the third person. "He said he wanted," &c. Indeed, to the best of my recollection,

he had sworn exactly the truth; but the reader will soon see the chairman's motive for wishing his evidence to be more pointed. I now felt my hopes revive, and Mr Pettit being sworn to depose that he had not empowered me to demand the said goods, which were now produced and identified, I was put upon my defence, upon which I addressed the court to the following effect:—"May it please your worship, and gentlemen of the jury, I am here indicted for obtaining goods under false pretences. From the evidence of the witness York, you hear of no pretences whatever which I used; he merely swears that I said I wanted such and such articles, and that he delivered them to me without scruple. However, I may have been morally culpable, I hope, gentlemen, you will only be guided in your verdict by the evidence before you, and I humbly submit that the charge against me has not been formally substantiated. Gentlemen, I leave my case in your hands, and the question of law to the learned chairman, who, I am persuaded, will impartially decide thereon."

The chairman now addressing the jury, spoke as follows: "Gentlemen, I am sorry, for the ends of public justice, that there is but too much reason in what the prisoner has advanced; but he is a very young man, and I sincerely hope that if he this day escapes the correction of the law, he will never again transgress in a similar way. Gentlemen, the prisoner is charged in the indictment with falsely obtaining these goods in the names of William Giffard, Christopher Fisher, and James Orrell Pettit. Now in the evidence of York, the shopman, we hear not a syllable of such pretence, or of the prisoner using either of those names, consequently, the case is not made out, and you must acquit the prisoner." This they immediately did, and after an admonition from the chairman, I was discharged, having first applied for the money, &c. taken from me on my apprehension, which

the court ordered to be restored. Mr Pettit seemed much chagrined at my escape, and I was in some fear that he would endeavour to have me detained ; but it is probable that he thought it not worth his while, as he could not hope to obtain any restitution from me ; however, he suffered me to depart in peace, to my great joy. I have reason to believe that he had not discovered the full extent of my depredations on his property at this time, and that he had not yet come to a knowledge of the money I received in payment of bills at the west end of the town.

On regaining my liberty, my first step was to go in quest of the person to whose care I had consigned my effects ; and who, on pretence of much business, had abstained for a fortnight past from visiting me in the prison. Inquiring at his usual place of abode, I found that he had quitted his lodging a few days after the period of my apprehension, and the people of the house knew not where he was gone. I then called at the printing-office in which he was employed when I first knew him, and there learnt that he had suddenly absented himself, and was reported to have engaged with some person of that profession in the country. Every inquiry I could make was equally fruitless, and I had the mortification to find that this supposed friend had treacherously converted all my little property to his own use, without regard to the helpless situation in which he left me. I had no longer any doubts about the fate of my twenty guineas, and articles of apparel, which he had persuaded me the officers must have purloined.

My situation was now deplorable enough ; I possessed only the clothes on my back, and about five pounds in money, the expenses of living, &c. during my confinement, having consumed the rest of my stock. However, I had regained my freedom, which I little expected, and I consoled myself with the reflection that I might have been still worse off than I

really was. I engaged a cheap but decent lodging, and furnished myself with such necessaries as were indispensable for my present comfort, and external appearance; and I next began to muse upon the course now to be adopted for my future subsistence.

A few days after my acquittal, I was accosted one afternoon, in Fleet street, by a young man, whose face I had some faint recollection of. While I was considering where I had seen him, he anticipated me, by asking if I did not remember him in New prison, where he was confined on the common side, and had frequently conversed with me through the gate of the lodge, at which I sometimes amused myself with viewing the proceedings in the yard below me. This young man was then only confined till the sessions on a charge of assault, but, being poor in circumstances, was unable to pay the expenses of admission "between gates." I immediately recognised him, and he gave me joy on my deliverance. He was now very well attired, and invited me to drink a glass; to which, as I had always found much pleasure in his conversation, I willingly consented, and accompanied him to a house, called the White Swan, near Temple bar. Here my inviter seemed quite at home; he introduced me to a neat little parlour, in which were a number of persons smoking their pipes, and drinking wine, punch, &c. I observed that my conductor, whom I shall in future call Bromley, appeared to know and be known by them all, and that they regarded me with an inquiring eye.

Having taken our seats in a vacant part of the room, our conversation was at first upon general topics; at length Bromley inquired in a friendly manner, how I employed myself, and on my answering candidly, that I really was destitute of employment, and almost of money, he observed that I was to blame if I wanted money when anybody else had any; that for his part he never would; and that if I would take a walk with

him, I should be welcome; he added that he had that day turned out three readers*, but without finding a shilling in either of them; however, said he, we cannot expect to be always equally lucky. I confess I was ashamed to own that I had never practised thieving, for (thanks to my late seven weeks' education) I understood his meaning well. I therefore told him that I had not been accustomed to buzzing,† and should be unable to do my part. On this, Bromley replied that we should have at least one other person with us, and that he himself would work, while he only required me and the third man to cover‡ him. Having thus answered my objection, as I had no scruples of conscience to overcome, I agreed to accompany him. Shortly afterwards a genteel looking man, advancing to our table, from among the other company, asked Bromley if he was inclined for a walk; at the same time looking significantly first at me, then at my companion. The latter answered, "Yes, sir, with all my heart; this gentleman is a friend of mine, he'll take a turn with us: it's all right: he's one of us." Bromley having discharged our reckoning, we then set out, and proceeded up Fleet street, till we observed a crowd of gazers at the windows of Messrs Laurie and Whittle, printsellers. Bromley immediately joined the throng, we keeping close behind him wherever he moved; at length he gave us a sign to cover, and we had scarcely taken our stations, before Bromley drew back, and pulling the skirt of my coat, left the crowd, and crossing the way, turned up a court which led into another street. We followed him close, till he entered a public house, and we were no sooner in a private room, than Bromley drew from

* Pocket-books.

† Picking pockets.

‡ To stand or walk in such a situation, close to the person robbed, as to prevent passengers from noticing the depredation.

under his coat a large green pocket-book, which, it seems, he had, unobserved by me, extracted from the pocket of a gentleman by whose side he stood, when we advanced to cover him. The book, being opened, was found to contain a complete set of valuable surgeon's instruments, some private letters, and other papers, and in one of the pockets eleven pounds in bank notes; the money was immediately divided in equal shares, and the stranger observing that he knew where to fence* the book, allowed Bromley and myself five shillings each on that account. The papers, &c. having been committed to the flames, we then left the house; but my two companions having observed some police officers in Fleet street, deemed it imprudent to prolong our stay in that quarter, and it being now nearly dusk, at my request, we all three returned to the White Swan, as I was curious to know more of the various characters I had seen assembled there.

The seasonable relief my finances had experienced by this adventure, without any exertion or risk on my part, gave me much satisfaction; and I thought, to use the words of Mrs Peachum, in the *Beggar's Opera*, that this was "pretty encouragement for a young beginner."

It was no sooner dark and the candles lighted, than the room began to fill apace, and my friend Bromley gave me a description of each person as he entered, explaining the various branches of priggging, &c. in which they excelled, as well as their good or bad dispositions towards each other. I recognised among them several faces which I remembered to have seen at different public places, and even at coffee-houses and ordinaries, where they intermixed with the best company, and were treated with every respect.

From this time Bromley and myself became un-

* Sell.

parable. This young man was the son of a respectable master-tailor, and was himself bred to the same trade. Having formed bad connexions, (the usual root of all evil,) he had quitted his father's house about a year before I first knew him, and associating with "family people," had since supported himself by depredation; he was two years older than myself, and his father, considering him irreclaimable, had long since given him up.

For a few weeks we continued to go out* with one or other of the gentlemen frequenting the Swan; and after I had made the first essay, I became pretty expert in the art of buzzing. Our success was various, but we managed to live well, and I for my part soon acquired a good stock of clothes, books, and other comforts, as they were considered by me. As for Bromley, he was not so good a manager, and when absent from me, he led a very irregular life, lavishing his money without discrimination on the most unworthy objects, without taking any thought for the morrow, so that though our gains were equal, I became every day richer, while he was seldom master of a guinea beforehand. By degrees we detached ourselves from the society of those veteran prigs†, with whom we had first associated, and not confining our operations to one branch of depredation, we had recourse to various methods of getting money. It would be tedious to particularize every species of fraud and robbery, which we practised in the short space of three months, at the end of which period, it will be seen that the hand of justice arrested our further progress; and it is hardly credible, (but such is the fact,) that during this our limited career, we exercised alternately the following numerous modes of depredation; which, lest the reader should be unprovided with a cant dictionary, I shall briefly explain in succession;

* To go a thieving.

† Thieves

viz. buzzing (1), dragging (2), sneaking (3), hoisting (4), pinching (5), smashing (6), jumping (7), spanking (8), and starring (9); together with the kid-rig (10), the letter-racket (11), the order-racket (12), and the snuff-racket (13).

In these various exploits, we were sometimes assisted by a third person; and at others, though very rarely, we formed part of a numerous gang; but in general we acted by ourselves, and, considering our youth and inexperience, evinced a good deal of dexterity.

In the month of July 1800, finding myself inclined for a summer excursion into the country, I determined on a trip to Plymouth, having never been in the West of England, and invited my friend Bromley to accom-

- (1) Picking pockets in general.
- (2) Robbing carts, or carriages, of bales, trunks, &c.
- (3) Entering a house or shop, unobserved, and stealing whatever is most come-at-able.
- (4) Shop-lifting.
- (5) Secreting small trinkets of value in a shop, while pretending to select and purchase something.
- (6) Uttering counterfeit money, or forged bank notes.
- (7) Getting in at the lower windows of private houses, and robbing the apartments of plate or other portable goods.
- (8) Breaking a shop-window at night, having first tied the door to prevent a pursuit, then snatching at any articles of value within reach.
- (9) Cutting a hole in a pane of glass, without noise, in order to rob the window of something before determined on.
- (10) Defrauding errand boys, or porters, of their load, by false pretences of various kinds.
- (11) Obtaining money from charitable persons, by some fictitious statement of distress.
- (12) Obtaining goods from a tradesman by false pretences, or by a forged order in writing.
- (13) Throwing snuff in the eyes of a shop-keeper, and then running off with such money, or valuable property as may lay within reach.

pany me. As we, neither of us, possessed much money, I proposed to travel in the same manner as I had formerly done, in my Portsmouth expedition, and to defray our expenses by practising the same imposition, which I now well knew to be a systematic fraud, known among "family people" by the title of "the letter-racket."

We accordingly left town together, equipped with a few indispensables, contained in a small bundle which we carried alternately, and provided with a new edition of "Carey's Itinerary." Our first resting place was Hammersmith, where, in the course of four hours, I realised as many pounds; my companion in the mean time lying dormant in a public house, for in this practice he was not qualified to bear a part; but we intended to omit no opportunity which might offer of obtaining money by any other means.

Quitting Hammersmith, we proceeded to Hounslow, where we arrived the same evening, and reposed for the night. The following day was spent in collecting from the well-disposed inhabitants of the town, and on the ensuing morning, we walked to Staines, a distance of seven miles. Arriving at the latter place about one o'clock, we put up at a genteel public house, and regaled ourselves with a good dinner. We had just dined, and were enjoying a pipe and a bowl of punch, when a respectable looking old gentleman entered the room, and begged, if it was agreeable, to take a pipe with us. This being a sort of public parlour, of course we could have no objection, and we soon entered into familiar chat, the stranger proving a very pleasant companion. Having passed about an hour in conversation, I rose, and, apologizing to the old gentleman, told Bromley I would step out and transact a little business, desiring him to entertain the stranger until my return. My intention was to visit some of the most respectable inhabitants with my petition, and Bromley, of course, well understood my meaning.

On quitting the inn, which was situated in the principal street, and about the centre of the town, I turned to my right hand, towards London, proposing to take the houses and shops on that side the street, until I came to the extremity or entrance of the town, and then to return on the other side, until I arrived opposite our inn; calculating that this task would occupy the remainder of that day, and meaning on the next to make a circuit of the other half of the town.

My first essay was at a watch-maker's, about six doors from the house at which we put up. Entering the shop with my letter in my hand, I was rather surprised at finding no person in attendance, and still more so, when, upon knocking on the counter, not a soul appeared to answer me. Casting my eyes round, I perceived a door of communication with a back room, in which I distinctly heard a child crying, and the voice of a woman soothing it. There were a number of watches hanging in the window, and conceiving I ought to profit by this opportunity, I determined without hesitation to do so. Having, therefore, first slightly repeated my knock, and then looked up and down the street, in which (as frequently happens in country towns) not a creature appeared, I commenced my depredations. The window, as is usual with watch-makers, was enclosed with a kind of lattice-work, and there was no means of access to the watches but by a small gate, which opened behind the counter. The attempt was rather hazardous, but the temptation predominated, and over the counter I jumped. Having entered the little enclosure, I took down the watch nearest to me, which was a silver one, and put it in my pocket; then another, also silver; and had just extended my hand towards a third, which from the colour I supposed to be gold, when lo! to my utter confusion, the very same old gentleman I had left in the company of Bromley ad-

vanced to the window, as if passing by ; but stopping short, and looking earnestly towards me for a moment, he suddenly turned round, and, appearing much agitated, retraced his steps as fast as his age would permit him towards the inn. This transaction was of course momentary, and I had no time for reflection ; but the terror and alarm always consequent on conscious guilt operated so strongly upon my mind, that it instantly struck me the old man had been aware of my depredations, and had hurried away to give an alarm and cause my apprehension. My fears were so great that I had not even power to take down the third watch, but hastened out of the shop, and, on gaining the street, turned to my right hand (not daring to return to the inn), and putting the best foot foremost, I found myself in a few minutes at the end of the town, and the London road lying before me. However, as I every moment expected to be pursued and overtaken, I was afraid to continue in that road ; but, availing myself of the first turning I came to, which was a narrow lane on my right, I quitted the turnpike road, intending to take a circuitous course in order to avoid a pursuit.

It was now about five o'clock, and although I much regretted the situation in which I had left poor Bromley, who had no money about him, as I was always purse-bearer, yet I conceived it would be madness in me to return to Staines, convinced as I was of the danger to which I had exposed myself. I therefore determined to proceed direct to town, not doubting that Bromley would find means to extricate himself, and speedily follow me. I was for some time at a loss to find my way, but meeting a countryman, he directed me ; and after crossing a number of fields, and scrambling over hedges and ditches, I gained the high road once more, and pushing forward, stopped at length to refresh myself at a public-house about five miles from Staines.

It was by this time dusk, and, while I was baiting at this house, one of the Bath stages luckily stopping at the door, I applied to the coachman for a passage, and ascending the vehicle, arrived safe at Hyde park corner, about nine o'clock the same night.

The following day I was, of course, anxiously solicitous about poor Bromley. I made inquiry for him at every place he was accustomed to frequent, but without success, during the whole morning. At length, about four in the afternoon, as I was walking through Leicester fields, I unexpectedly met him, to my great satisfaction. Mutual inquiries immediately took place; and I was surprised to hear him express the greatest astonishment at my sudden departure from Staines, for which he told me he was unable to account. This of course produced an explanation, when it appeared that nothing whatever had transpired respecting the robbery I had committed, nor had Bromley seen or heard any more of the old gentleman after the latter had quitted his company, which he did a few minutes after myself. I must, therefore, have been mistaken in my notion that he had observed my actions through the watch maker's window, of which, at the moment, I entertained no doubt; so true it is, that a guilty conscience needs no accuser. What could have occasioned his sudden retreat, is therefore still a mystery to me.

Bromley then proceeded to inform me, that on finding I did not return about my usual hour to tea, he began to fear something unpleasant had happened, and had accordingly taken a walk through the town in quest of me; but not succeeding in his object, his astonishment and fears increased, and both were heightened when bed-time approached without my appearance; that, being willing however to hope for the best, he had supped by himself, and telling the landlady, that he supposed his friend was detained on business which prevented his return, he had at length

retired to bed. The following morning he renewed his search, and meeting with no better success, he took French leave of the landlady, suffering her to retain our common bundle of necessaries, which, indeed, were of more value than our reckoning could amount to; and quitting Staines about eight o'clock, the poor fellow had travelled on foot to town, (a distance of sixteen miles) having accidentally one shilling in his pocket, which procured him a breakfast, at the same public house at which I took the Bath stage.

Thus ended our projected expedition to Plymouth; for having been so disappointed in the outset, we had no inclination to make a second attempt. I sold the two watches for five pounds, and dividing that sum, as well as the residue of what I had acquired by the "letter racket," with Bromley, we turned our thoughts to other modes of obtaining money.

Soon after my return to London, from Staines, I was one day passing through Newgate street, immediately opposite the walls of Newgate, when observing a grave-looking elderly gentleman, who was walking just before me, to have a pocket-book in his outside coat-pocket, I made an attempt to ease him of it; but it being of an unusual size, and rather ponderous, it slipped from my fingers, and alarmed the gentleman; who, turning round sharply, and seeing me close behind him, clapped his hand upon my shoulder, saying very drily, "Holloa! youngman, when did you come to town?" I of course affected to be much surprised, and with a look of displeasure at his freedom, begged he would explain his meaning. The stranger, staring me full in the face, and smiling sarcastically, pointed with his finger to the opposite walls; and, in a low voice, said, "You see that stone building, my pretty youth; mark my words, that will be your resting place very soon."—Then, without suffering me to reply, he crossed hastily towards Snowhill, leaving me to reflect at leisure upon his

words, and wonder at the strangeness of this adventure!

This gentleman, one would think, possessed the gift of prophecy; for, as he had foretold, in less than six weeks after, I actually became an inmate of Newgate!

On Sunday the 17th of August 1800, Bromley and myself, after breakfasting together, agreed to walk into the city; our business there being to purchase some base half-guineas and seven-shilling pieces, of a Jew in Petticoat lane, Whitechapel. We accordingly set out, and about one o'clock entered Cheapside, when we observed a great concourse of people assembled round the door and windows of a draper's shop. As is natural to persons in London, we entered the crowd out of curiosity; at least that was my sole motive, for I always opposed robbing on the Sabbath day: (at which the reader may perhaps smile.) My partner Bromley however had an eye to business, and I soon perceived by his motions, that he was scrutinizing the pockets of the spectators. I was however at some distance from him, and signified my dissent by a look; in fact, I had no sooner ascertained the object of the people's curiosity, which was an attempt made in the preceding night to break the shop open, of which the shutters bore evident marks, than I beckoned to Bromley, and made the best of my way out of the crowd. I had no doubt but he would immediately follow me, and having got clear of the mob, and proceeded slowly about thirty yards from the spot, on my way towards Whitechapel, I made a stand, and turned round to see if Bromley was coming. The reader (*unless he doubts my veracity*) will judge of my surprise, when I saw my poor companion struggling with a man who held him at arm's length with one hand, and had in the other a silk handkerchief; at the same time calling after a person who had also left the crowd, and was proceeding the con

trary way (towards St Paul's)—“Stop, sir, come back; you're robb'd!” The person called to immediately turned back, and at the same moment the fellow who held Bromley, seeing me looking earnestly at the transaction, exclaimed, pointing at me, “Stop him in the blue coat! that's the other.” Knowing my innocence, I did not attempt to escape; and a man now advancing to the spot where I stood, seized me by the collar, and dragged me back to the crowd. The person said to be robbed had by this time returned, and being desired to search if he had lost anything, did so, and missed his handkerchief. The man who had apprehended Bromley proved to be a turnkey at the Poultry Compter, and a city constable; the other, who seized me, was brother to the former, and also a peace officer: their name, Alderman. These two having now taken the address of the stranger, who identified the handkerchief, and having desired him to attend the next day at the Mansion House, they proceeded to escort Bromley and myself to the Compter. On arriving at this prison, they immediately searched us, and took from each of us a silk handkerchief, a pocket-book, and other articles, all our own property; but unluckily Bromley had a second handkerchief about him (I believe a white muslin one) which he had worn round his neck the preceding day. Being now locked up by ourselves, we had leisure to talk over this unfortunate affair, and I could not help censuring Bromley for the imprudent act he had committed, especially where the object was so insignificant. Indeed I had frequently since our connexion had occasion to blame him for taking so petty an article as a handkerchief, which notwithstanding he persisted in doing, particularly if it was of a fancy pattern. However, as there was no recalling the event, it was agreed that he should make the best defence he could for himself, and deny any knowledge of me, which, as I was not near him,

when he was detected, I conceived would effectually procure my liberation. Thus, after committing numerous acts of robbery with impunity, I was at last apprehended for what I had no more actual concern in than the reader of the page I am now writing.

CHAPTER XIII.

EXAMINED BEFORE THE LORD MAYOR. FULLY COMMITTED, TRIED, AND CAST. MY FATHER'S FAITH AND ASSURANCES. MY DISAPPOINTMENT ON BEING TRANSPORTED FOR SEVEN YEARS. CONTRACT THE GOAL DISTEMPER, AND AM REDUCED TO THE POINT OF DEATH. RECOVER MY HEALTH, AND AM SENT ON BOARD A TRANSPORT FOR BOTANY BAY.

THE next day, Monday, we were taken to the Mansion House for examination before the lord mayor. The owner of the handkerchief being in attendance, one of the officers acquainted his lordship that, observing both Bromley and myself to be very busy in the crowd assembled in Cheapside, the preceding day, and suspecting our designs, he had watched us narrowly, and at length observed Bromley to take a handkerchief from a gentleman's pocket, which he immediately endeavoured to convey to me; but before he could do so, he, the witness, laid hold of him, and took the handkerchief from his hand; on which (he stated) I endeavoured to escape, but that he pointed me out to his brother, who happened to be with him, and desired him to secure me, while he himself called back the gentleman who had been robbed, and informed him of the circumstance. (So much for the veracity

of this deponent's evidence, to which he afterwards deliberately swore.

His brother corroborated the foregoing account, which he was well enabled to do, having heard the whole of it; and with this addition that, in the course of his duty as a city constable, he had seen us daily perambulating the streets, during the busy hours, and knew us both to be notorious pickpockets. (This was more wickedly false than all the rest, for we had never given one of the city officers the least opportunity to suspect or notice us: but it had the effect they intended, that of inducing the magistrate and prosecutor to deal more rigidly with us.) They further swore that, on searching us, they found two pocket-books, several handkerchiefs, and other suspicious articles (meaning by these last, I suppose, a small knife, and a pair of scissors, which we each carried about with us) all which they doubted not to be stolen!

Mr Dowell, the person they had invited to prosecute us, now deposed that he was a tradesman living in Chancery lane; that he knew nothing of the robbery, but being called back by the first witness, he missed his pocket-handkerchief, and that the one produced by the officer he believed to be his, as it was of the same pattern, but had no mark by which he could identify it. His lordship then calling upon us for our defence, Bromley declared that he had picked the handkerchief up in the crowd, and at the same moment the officer seized him, and charged him with stealing it; that he was going on his own business at the time of this affair happening, and that so far from my being in his company, he never saw me before in his life.

The lord mayor appearing to have some pity on our youth, asked Mr Dowell if he was determined to prosecute us, hinting at the same time that he (his lordship) did not wish to urge him to that measure,

provided we were willing to enter into his majesty's service, but that he was at liberty to act as he thought fit. I was in great hopes that Mr Dowell would incline to lenity, but the officers took him on one side, and found means to persuade him that he ought, for the sake of the public, to let the law take its course. He was thereupon bound over to prosecute, and we were committed to take our trial at the next Old Bailey sessions, commencing the 17th of September. For the present, we were remanded to the Poultry Compter; there to remain until moving day, that is, the Thursday before sessions.

As I conceived myself in some danger from the inveterate malice of the two brothers, I deemed it advisable to take all possible measures for my deliverance; and it occurred to me, that as I knew no person in London whom I could depend on as a real friend, I should do well to inform my father of my situation, and request the aid of his experience and personal mediation in my behalf.—It was now upwards of five years since I had any intercourse with my parents, further than twice or thrice calling at their residence, and a formal inquiry after their health, and sometimes a cold salutation when my father and I met in the streets: at which times I always avoided any explanation as to my circumstances, or the mode of life I led; and since my quitting the navy, I had never exchanged a word with them. I now therefore wrote to my father, acquainting him with my distress, and begging to see him without delay. He very soon complied with my request, and I informed him (with as much adherence to truth as I thought necessary) of the cause of my confinement. My father, who I have before mentioned to have been unfortunate in his speculations, had been for several years declining in the world, and notwithstanding his want of affection towards me, I felt much concern at his decayed appearance. He pro-

mised me every assistance he could render by his personal exertions, but declared his inability to extend pecuniary aid, the times being at this crisis peculiarly hard, and every necessary of life daily advancing in price. Fortunately I had some good clothes, &c. and a few pounds in money by me ; and my father, being directed by me, repaired to my lodgings, and secured all my effects, which he removed to his own house, supplying me occasionally with such articles or money as I found myself in need of. My father at this period resided in St George's fields, where he had taken and furnished a small house, the major part of which he let out in lodgings. By this expedient, and I believe (under the rose) a little dabbling in the lottery, he made a shift to keep the wolf (or rather the bailiff) from the door. My mother also visited me in the Compter, accompanied by my two sisters, and shewed me every attention in her power.

Being removed on the usual day to Newgate, I applied myself to draw up a brief, for the purpose of employing a counsel in behalf of my unfortunate companion, who had not himself the means of obtaining legal assistance. As to myself, I conceived nothing but the grossest perjury could induce a jury to convict me, under the circumstances of my apprehension ; knowing as I do that in no court in Europe has a prisoner so much justice shewn him, or such lenity in a doubtful case, as at the Old Bailey : besides, my father believing my protestations of innocence (I mean of all connexion with Bromley) would not for a moment entertain a doubt of my acquittal, and therefore opposed the unnecessary expense of feeing counsel. Having completed the brief to my satisfaction, I sent it (unknown to my father) with the usual fee, to Mr Alley.

Everything being thus arranged, and a true bill returned by the grand jury, upon the evidence of the officers to the same effect as before, I was on the 23rd

of September put to the bar, together with Bromley; and, as I have so frequently read the printed report of our trial, that it will never be erased from my memory, I shall give the reader the substance of the proceedings, which I can do nearly *verbatim*: and, I believe upon the whole, a more extraordinary trial has been seldom found upon record.

TRIAL, &c.

Alexander Bromley and James Vaux were indicted for feloniously stealing on the 17th of August, a handkerchief, value two shillings, the goods of William Dowell, privily from his person.

To this indictment the prisoners pleaded "Not guilty."

Mr Alley, counsel for Bromley, desired that the witnesses might be examined apart, with which request the court complied.

William Alderman sworn.—"I am a city constable, and turnkey of the Poultry Compter. On Sunday the 17th of August, I was passing through Cheapside, when observing a crowd of persons collected together, I went up to enquire the cause; I there saw the two prisoners, and knowing them to be suspicious characters, I watched their motions, and presently saw Bromley take a handkerchief from the pocket of the prosecutor, which he attempted to give to Vaux, but before Vaux could take it from him, I seized Bromley with the handkerchief in his hand." (Here witness went on to describe our apprehension, in the same terms as he had done before the lord mayor) "I can produce the handkerchief; I have had it ever since. On searching the prisoners, we found upon them two pocket books, and several handkerchiefs, with other suspicious articles; but the lord mayor ordered them to be returned, when he committed the prisoners for trial."

Cross-examined by Mr Alley.—Q. Which of the prisoners took the handkerchief?

A. They both had hold of it: the biggest, Vaux, let go immediately.

Q. Then you mean to swear they both took it?

A. Yes.

Q. Which pocket was it taken from?

A. The left-hand coat pocket.

Q. You know there is a reward, if these two poor boys are convicted? Was it you that advised the prosecutor to lay this indictment capital?

A. The grand jury found the bill. (*Witness ordered to withdraw.*)

Thomas Alderman sworn.—“I was with my brother. I saw both the prisoners very busy, lifting up the lids of people’s pockets. Bromley took a gentleman’s handkerchief, on which my brother seized him. I apprehended Vaux. He had got away to some distance from the crowd.”

Cross-examined by Mr Alley.—Q. What are you, sir?

A. I am a tailor, and a constable of the city.

Q. So you thought you could get more by prosecuting these two poor young lads, than by sitting on your shop-board at work?

A. I did my duty.

Q. Who took the handkerchief?

A. Bromley took it out, and Vaux laid hold of the corner, to take it from Bromley.

Q. Which pocket was it in, the right or the left?

A. The right-hand pocket.*

Q. Now, sir, you know these poor lads are trying for an offence, for which they are liable to be hanged, if they are convicted: I ask you, upon the oath you have taken, whether you ever heard of two persons putting their hands in a man’s pocket at once.

* See the evidence of William Alderman.

A. I never did.

Q. Then, if your brother has said so, he has told a lie?

A. That he certainly has. (*A general laugh in the court.*)

[*The handkerchief produced and identified by the prosecutor, from its similitude to the one he lost.*]

Bromley called four witnesses, and Vaux two witnesses, who gave them a good character.

Bromley's defence.—“I picked the handkerchief up in the crowd.”

Vaux's defence.—“I am innocent.”

Bromley, *Guilty* (aged 20)

Vaux, *Guilty* (aged 18)

Of stealing the handkerchief, value eleven pence.

Thus ended this curious trial, to the great dissatisfaction of a crowded audience, who expressed their sentiments by loud and distinct murmurs. The jury returned the above verdict, in order to reduce the offence to simple felony, by finding the value of the property under one shilling; stealing from the person to which amount is death. My father, together with Mr Kirby, the keeper of Newgate, stood at my elbow during the whole trial, and both advised me to make the laconic defence I did. It was their firm belief that I should be acquitted, and the result surprised them much. The witnesses to Bromley's character were tailors, with whom he had formerly worked; those in my favour, were very respectable tradesmen, adduced by my father. On leaving the bar, the latter, as well as Mr Kirby, comforted me with the assurance that the court would only impose a small fine* upon us; and my father promised to use all his interest, and that of his friends with the recorder, previous to the

* A short confinement is here meant.

latter passing sentence, for which end Mr Kirby advised a petition to be immediately prepared. This task I accomplished the next day, and delivered it to my father for presentation.

Both Bromley and myself (buoyed up by the assurances above-mentioned) entertained the fullest hopes that our sentence would be lenient. On the last day of the session, according to custom, all the prisoners convicted were brought into court to receive judgment. Those capitally convicted were first put to the bar, and received the awful sentence of death; after which a few were ordered to be transported for fourteen years; and then forty persons were called in succession (among whom were myself and Bromley) and being placed at the bar, the whole forty were collectively sentenced to seven years' transportation, beyond the high seas! This severe doom affected us both in a very great degree. I, for my part, was inconsolable, and shed tears in abundance. My father, on visiting me the next day, professed much concern, and would have still flattered me with hopes of a reverse; but I have since had good reason to believe that, instead of using his influence in my favour, he secretly approved of the event, conceiving, I suppose, that sending me out of the country might save me from a still worse fate; and that this was therefore (to use the common phrase of parents on such occasions) the best thing that could have happened for me.

After the first effects of our grief had subsided, the society of our fellow-prisoners, and the bustle constantly prevailing in the prison, soon banished every trace of sorrow, and we became as cheerful as the best. My father and mother paid me every attention, and the produce of my own effects was fully adequate to my support for several months: when that resource failed, my father contributed his mite; and with the help of another friend or two, I was comparatively comfortable during my continuance in Newgate. As

for Bromley, his father, on hearing his sad fate, had allotted him a weekly pittance, sufficient, with care, to keep him above want.

About a month after the close of the session, the gaol being unusually crowded with prisoners, a most dreadful contagion, called the gaol fever, made its appearance, and spread so universally throughout every ward and division of the prison, that very few escaped its attack. I was one of the first to contract it, and was immediately carried to the infirmary, or sick-ward of the prison, where I only remember having my irons taken off, and being put to bed; for the same night I became delirious, and was so dreadfully affected, as to continue insensible for three weeks, during which time I had no knowledge of my parents, or of any other person who approached me; and the fever raged to such a degree, that I was obliged to be bound in my bed, in order to restrain me from acts of mischief. My poor companion, Bromley, was attacked about the same time as myself; and, on recovering my reason, I found him laid in the adjacent bed to my own, and was informed his sufferings had been equally grievous with mine. It pleased God, however, to restore us both to perfect health; but numerous were the unhappy persons who fell victims to this dire disease.

It is usual to make occasional draughts of convicts under sentence of transportation, from Newgate to the Hulks at Woolwich, Portsmouth, &c. on board of which receptacles they continue until a ship is in readiness, to convey them to New South Wales. Few prisoners are suffered to remain above three months in the prison, after their conviction. A longer continuance is effected either by bribery or interest. My father, having heard a shocking account of the Hulks, had waited on Mr Kirby, the gaoler, soon after my receiving sentence, and obtained a promise that I should remain in Newgate until a ship was on the point of sailing for this colony; and herein he was as

good as his word. My father at length received a private intimation from Mr Kirby, that he had no time to lose in arranging matters for my departure: accordingly, with the assistance of two or three other friends, my father contrived to pack up a few of the most necessary comforts for my use on the passage, which he afterwards sent to Portsmouth by the coach. On the 15th of May 1801, my father, mother, and sisters came to take a final leave of me; there was something solemn in this scene, which affected me much, though our mutual regard was not of the most violent nature. I also took leave of my companion in adversity, who, by what means I know not, still remained in Newgate, but was shortly after my departure removed to the hulks at Portsmouth. The next morning (May 16th) at four o'clock, myself, and thirteen others, who had been all kept back for this opportunity, were attached together by a strong chain, and escorted by the keeper and his subordinates to Blackfriars bridge, where a lighter was in readiness to receive us, in which we proceeded down the river Thames to Gravesend, and about noon arrived alongside the *Minorca* transport, captain Leith, bound for Port Jackson, in company with the *Canada* and *Nile*, which ships were also lying at this anchorage, for the purpose of receiving their prisoners on board.

CHAPTER XIV.

SAIL FROM ENGLAND. ACCOUNT OF OUR VOYAGE. ARRIVE AT PORT JACKSON. WRITE IN MY OWN BEHALF TO COMMISSARY PALMER. THAT GENTLEMAN IS PLEASED TO NOTICE MY APPLICATION. LAND AT SYDNEY, AND AM CARRIED BEFORE GOVERNOR KING. A CURIOUS DIALOGUE BETWEEN HIS EXCELLENCY AND MYSELF. ORDERED TO HAWKESBURY, AS STORE-KEEPER'S CLERK.

HAVING entered the ship, we were all indiscriminately stripped (according to indispensable custom) and were saluted with several buckets of salt water, thrown over our heads by a boatswain's-mate. After undergoing this watery ordeal, we were compelled to put on a suit of slop-clothing. Our own apparel, though good in kind, being thrown overboard. We were then double-ironed, and put between decks, where we selected such births, for sleeping, &c. as each thought most eligible. The next day we received on board forty-six more prisoners from the hulks at Woolwich, and the Canada fifty. The Nile also took on board one hundred women, from the different gaols in Great Britain. The three ships then sailed for Spithead, where, on our arrival, the Minorca and Canada had their numbers augmented, from the hulks at Portsmouth, to one hundred men each. Every thing being now in readiness, we only waited for the convoy to assemble, with which we were to proceed to a certain latitude.

During this interval, I wrote the first intimation of my unhappy state to my dear and honoured grand-

father, palliating the facts as much as possible, and positively denying any criminal connexion between myself and Bromley. This I did, in order to save those heart-rending pangs which I knew my venerable and virtuous benefactors would suffer, if they had been acquainted with the dissolute life I had for some time led. In a few days, I received a long and most affectionate letter from my grandfather, in which he deplored the harshness of my destiny ; but, far from aggravating my sufferings by reflections on my manifold indiscretions, this good old man laboured only to press my resignation to the dispensations of Providence, and to exhort me, by my future conduct, to make atonement for the past. He added a great deal of good advice as to my behaviour in the degraded state to which I was reduced, concluding with his blessing, and that of my grandmother, and a most pathetic and tender farewell. I had assured my grandfather in my letter, that no extension of pecuniary aid could at all ameliorate my situation, as I had a sufficient store of necessary comforts for my voyage : my motive for this assurance was to prevent him from distressing himself still further in his old age on an object so worthless as myself, by whose expensive adoption and education, he and the partner of his griefs were already reduced to a state bordering on indigence, aggravated by mental anxiety and sorrow for me, the unworthy cause.

On the 21st of June, we sailed from Spithead, in company with about three hundred sail of merchantmen, bound to various ports, under convoy of a frigate and a sloop of war. The convoy parted from us soon after we passed the Canary Islands, and our three ships proceeded in company. A few days after we put to sea, I was noticed by captain Leith, to whom I had (as my grandfather advised me) offered the services of my pen, &c. The captain, in consequence, employed me during the voyage in writing

his log, journal, and other accounts, and extended to me all the indulgence my situation would admit of. The latter end of August we arrived at Rio de Janeiro, where we had every refreshment the place afforded, and, after a continuance of thirty days, we resumed our voyage. Nothing worthy of notice occurred therein; our little squadron kept company until we made the harbour of Port Jackson, which we did on the 14th of December, and the same day came to an anchor in Sidney cove.

Among my fellow prisoners, was a young man named Calvert, with whom I had become very intimate. In the course of our passage, this person had shewn me an open letter of recommendation to John Palmer, esq. then commissary of New South Wales, which was from a particular friend of the latter gentleman, and pleaded strongly in favour of the bearer. A few days before our arrival, it occurred to me that a humble application in my own behalf to Mr Palmer might have the effect of obtaining for me some little distinction, as I heard a most amiable character of him, and conceived my services might not be unacceptable in his public department. I therefore wrote a respectful letter, which I consigned to the care of captain Leith, who promised not only to deliver it himself, but to speak in my favour, both to Mr Palmer and his excellency the governor.

The second day after our arrival, several gentlemen came on board, to muster and inspect the prisoners: among the number was Mr Palmer himself, who, having received my letter, was pleased to tell me in the kindest manner that he had mentioned me to the governor, and that I might accordingly expect a favourable appointment on my landing. The majority of the prisoners were sent up the country the day after the muster, to various kinds of labour; but myself and a few others were detained on board until the 19th, on which day we landed at Sidney, and were immediately

conducted to the Government house, in order to be severally examined and disposed of by governor King. We were called in succession for our audience; and, when it came to my turn, I entered the room with a respectful bow to the gentlemen assembled; for there were seated at a table several officers of the colony, besides his excellency. The latter, however, I soon distinguished by his manner of addressing me, and as the particulars of this interview may afford some entertainment to those who were not acquainted with the eccentric character of governor King, I shall give the reader our conversation in dialogue, as near as my memory will permit.

Governor. (Regarding me from head to foot, with a most inquisitive eye, or rather four eyes, for he wore spectacles, and with a manner the very reverse to encouraging.) Well, Mr Vaux, what were you sent here for?

Vaux. (Of course a little embarrassed at this unexpected question, so abruptly put.) Sir, I had the misfortune to be acquainted with a person of bad character, who in my company committed—

Governor. (Interrupting me impatiently.) But, Mr Vaux, come to the point at once. I don't want you to come round here, and then back again, and round the other way (drawing circles on the table with his finger, and all the while staring at me, which indeed he continued to do as long as I remained in the room, as if determined to put me out of countenance;)—recollect, Mr Vaux, you are not at the bar of the Old Bailey now. Come to the point, sir—come to the point. I ask you what you were sent here for?

Vaux. Sir, I was charged with picking a gentleman's pocket; but, though your excellency may doubt my assertion, I solemnly assure you, I was innocent of that fact.

Governor. (With a most satirical smile, and throwing himself back in his chair.) Oh, I dare say, Mr

Vaux, very innocent no doubt. Quite innocent, I dare say. So the long and the short of it is, you were sent here for picking pockets?

Vaux. I confess, sir, that was the charge.

Governor. What have you been brought up to, Mr Vaux?

Vaux. Sir, I have been chiefly employed in the law; but I profess to be a clerk in general.

Governor. Pray, sir, what office were you in last?

Vaux. Sir, the last gentleman I served was Mr Preston, in King's Bench walk.

Governor. (With a frown.) That I very much doubt, sir; that I very much doubt, sir; that I very much doubt, Mr Vaux.

Vaux. I am sorry your excellency has so bad an opinion of me; I assure you, sir, it is the fact.

Governor. Well, Mr Vaux, I shall send you to a place where your roguery will very soon be found out.

Vaux. I hope not, your excellency; I trust you will have—

Governor. (Interrupting.) Well, I hope so too, Mr Vaux; I hope so too, I hope so too, sir; but mind—I only give you a caution; take care of yourself.

Then hastily scribbling a few words on a scrap of paper, he handed it to me, and ordering a light-horseman to attend me, made a motion for me to withdraw, which I was glad enough to do, in order to be relieved from this embarrassing examination. On going out the horseman informed me he had orders to see myself and baggage on board the Parramatta passage-boat; the paper I had received proved to be an order to the boatman to that effect, and on the reverse was a memorandum, purporting that I was appointed clerk to Mr Baker, store-keeper at Hawkesbury. Both these documents were signed P. G. K., as was his usual custom; but the whole so unintelligibly written, that it cost me much pains and some inquiry to decipher them.

I now took up my little box and my bed, and was conducted to the wharf, where I found the boat on the point of departure. After a pleasant passage we arrived at Parramatta, at which place I rested the ensuing day, and on Monday the 21st continued my journey by land to Hawkesbury, a distance of twenty-six miles. On this occasion I joined a party of travellers, accompanied by a cart in which I had deposited my luggage; these persons formed a sort of caravan, and were all well-armed, the natives being at this time in a state of warfare, and the roads thereby rendered dangerous. Late in evening we arrived at Hawkesbury, and being directed to Mr Baker's house, I immediately presented myself and my credentials to that gentleman.

CHAPTER XV.

MY CONDUCT AT HAWKESBURY. CONTINUE FOR THREE YEARS TO GIVE SATISFACTION TO MY PRINCIPAL. ORDERED BY GOVERNOR KING INTO THE SECRETARY'S OFFICE. GIVE WAY TO THE TEMPTATIONS WITH WHICH I AM SURROUNDED, AND BEGIN TO LEAD A DISSIPATED LIFE IN COMPANY WITH SOME OTHER CLERKS. CONCERT A SYSTEM OF FRAUD UPON THE KING'S STORES, WHICH WE PRACTISE SUCCESSFULLY FOR SOME TIME. THE IMPOSITION IS AT LENGTH DETECTED. I AM IN CONSEQUENCE DISMISSED THE OFFICE AND SENT TO HARD LABOUR, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE.

MR BAKER received me with kindness and great pleasure, as my predecessor having quitted him some weeks before, he was at a loss for a proper assistant. In a

few days I had a comfortable residence assigned me by the commanding officer of the settlement, and my duty being exempted from all hard labour, and of such a nature as I found pleasure in performing, I soon felt myself comparatively happy. With retrospective satisfaction, I can truly say, that I behaved in this situation with so much propriety as to obtain the favour of my principal, and the good opinion of the resident magistrate, Dr Arndell, whose four children I attended at my leisure hours, in the quality of preceptor. Both this gentleman and Mr Baker vied with each other in shewing me every mark of kindness in their power. Mr Baker informed me that governor King made frequent and particular inquiries of him respecting my conduct, and I felt the highest gratification from the reflection that I had happily falsified his excellency's uncharitable prediction as to my real character. Mr Palmer also, who had been the first kind promoter of my good fortune, made similar inquiries of Mr Baker, and from the report he received of my talents, expressed a desire to transfer me from Hawkesbury to the commissary's office at Sidney, in which department there was then a great press of business, and expert clerks were not at that period so numerous as at present. Mr Baker, however, being unwilling to part with me, paid no attention to the wish of Mr Palmer, until the latter gentleman at length ordered in direct terms, by an official letter, that I should be immediately sent to Sydney. The governor coming up to Hawkesbury a day or two afterwards, Mr Baker represented to his excellency the inconvenience he should suffer if he was deprived of my assistance, and obtained an order from him to retain me in his service. This arrangement was not at all satisfactory to me, for I had long felt an earnest desire to be employed in the commissariat, as the public accounts therein kept were of such a description as I always took delight in, and I still flatter myself that, from my quickness in figures, I should be perfectly at

home in such a situation. However I was not to be gratified on that occasion, and I continued in the service of Mr Baker about three years. I had, in fact, reconciled myself to the idea of serving out my full term of banishment with this worthy man; but on a sudden, a letter was received by Mr Arndell from governor King, ordering my instant removal to Sydney, for the purpose of assisting as a clerk in the secretary's office, which, as it was then established, might be, and was generally, called the Governor's office, being attached to Government house, and under the immediate personal direction of the governor himself. Though this preferment seemed to hold out a prospect of future advantage, and to confer increased respectability, it was with some regret I quitted my comfortable little house and garden at the "Green Hills,"* where I had led a life of innocence and peaceful retirement; whereas I was now about to enter a vortex of dissipation, folly and wickedness, for such was Sydney compared to my late place of abode.

The governor received me very graciously, allotted me a neat brick-house in the vicinity of the office, and a government man, victualled from the king's stores, as a servant. For two or three months I continued very steady, and formed but few acquaintances. The governor behaved to me with great liberality, and refused me no reasonable request. By degrees, however, I began to degenerate. I increased my acquaintance among the commissary's and some other clerks, most of whom lived an expensive and dissipated life. All I can say in my own favour is, that I continued to be regular in my attendance at the office, and was never found defective, or incapable of my duty; but no sooner was I at my own disposal than I eagerly

* The settlement or camp at Hawkesbury, now called the town of Windsor.

sought my dissipated companions, and spent the rest of the day in drinking and other irregularities, sometimes at public or disorderly houses, and frequently at my own, where I had often the expensive pleasure of entertaining a large party of my fellow-scribes at my own cost. This course of life unavoidably drew me into great expenses, and I contracted several debts. Governor King, whose vigilant observation nothing of this sort could escape, gave me frequent and serious admonitions for my good ; but I was so infatuated as to disregard all advice, and only thought of devising pecuniary means to continue my licentious career. This was no easy task, as the nature of business in the secretary's office afforded few opportunities of realizing money by fraud, at least without the assistance of one or more confederates in a neighbouring department. The expensive rate at which the commissary's clerks constantly lived had become matter of surprise to the governor, as well as the magistrates, and was the theme of much conjecture among the inhabitants of Sydney. Still, though it was palpable they had recourse to fraud, they managed matters so adroitly, that no irregularity could be detected ; and the efforts of the executive authority to develop their system continued unavailing.

It was the custom of governor King, as I have before observed, to use only his initials as a signature on common occasions, and by application and practice I acquired a knack of imitating this sign-manual with sufficient accuracy to impose upon the parties to whom the superscription was addressed. Finding these three letters to have the magical effect of procuring for me whatever articles I required from the king's stores, I availed myself of their talismanic power, and converting the goods so obtained into money, I discharged my debts, and figured away with increased *éclat* among my fellow-clerks. As it was, however, both impolitic and dangerous to carry this branch of fraud too far,

or practice it too frequently, I at length found means to form a connexion with two or three of my most experienced friends, and we concerted such a system of ways and means as promised liberally to supply our wants, and while we continued true to each other, seemed to preclude a possibility of detection.

As I do not conceive myself justified in exposing either the parties who were my colleagues, or the particular nature of our artifices, let it suffice to inform the reader, that (as is indeed usually and deservedly the fate of all sinister practices) a mere and most unexpected accident, and for which none of us could attach blame to ourselves, discovered to the governor a principal branch of that prolific tree of fraud and imposition, from whose productive fruitfulness we had so abundantly derived the means of gratifying our folly and intemperance, which we at that time miscalled a love of pleasure; but (to continue the metaphor) the root and body of this tree still remained hidden from the strict and rigid search set on foot by the governor, and after this transitory alarm had subsided, proved to its remaining adherents a source of supply for a considerable time. It so happened that I was the ostensible party in the particular affair which led to this discovery; and governor King immediately took the most active measures to effect a full development of that system which he well knew to be the ground-work of malpractices to a considerable extent.

With this view I underwent several private examinations before his excellency and some of the principal officers, and great promises were held out to extract information from me, but without effect, as I was determined not to betray my friends, whose ruin could not at all palliate my guilt, or, as I conceived, render me a whit more deserving of mercy. I therefore persisted in asserting my innocence of the present charge, and disclaimed all knowledge of fraud in any other person.

The governor was so much exasperated at my obstinacy, that he at length had recourse (as a *dernier resort*) to the expedient of flogging, to extort confession. I must however (for justice sake) acknowledge that such cruelty was rarely exercised by governor King, who in his cooler moments was a most humane character. To the honour of our present governor (Macquarrie) be it recorded, that not only this inhuman practice is exploded, but corporal punishment is seldom inflicted at all, and when rendered necessary, it is used with moderation.

To resume—the governor finding me firm in my resolution to give him no satisfaction, ordered Dr Harris, who was present, to take me to the jail-yard, send for the public executioner, and there to give me five-and-twenties (this was his phrase) till I confessed the whole truth. Pursuant to this order I accompanied Mr Harris to the appointed spot, and while the finisher of the law was arranging matters for the approaching ceremony, the doctor used all his art of persuasion to induce me, for my own sake, to avoid the disgrace and pain of a correction which he must, if I continued obstinate, inflict in its fullest extent.

There was certainly much justice in this gentleman's arguments, and although I am confident I could have summoned up resolution to have continued silent under the threatened chastisement, yet, on mature reflection, I was convinced of the folly of such a conduct, as there was already sufficient and incontrovertible proof of guilt against me. I therefore determined to acknowledge my errors, and submit my fate to the governor's pleasure. Of this intention I acquainted Mr Harris, who immediately stayed the proceedings about to take place, and supplying me with pen and paper, desired me to write my declaration, which he would himself convey to the governor. In the letter I hastily composed, I informed his excellency, that feelings of remorse and regret for my ill condu t,

rather than a fear of punishment, had induced me to confess to him that I was guilty of the charge brought against me on the present occasion, and with shame I acknowledged having repeatedly transgressed in a similar manner, in order to defray the expenses of the unbecoming course of life I had imprudently fallen into. But I positively declared that no other person whatever was privy to my numerous acts of fraud, as those counterfeit documents framed by me had passed through the usual official channels as genuine; and consequently the parties who had admitted and sanctioned them were utterly guiltless of connivance, and had done no more than their duty. I added, that I knew how justly I deserved to suffer for my faults; but I also knew that mercy was the predominant sentiment in his excellency's bosom, and on that mercy I therefore most humbly threw myself.

Doctor Harris immediately proceeded to Government-house with my letter, and I was soon afterwards summoned to follow in person. His excellency seemed not displeased at the course I had adopted, and he was now in a very mild and placid mood. After expatiating at some length, and in a serio-comic strain, with his usual eccentricity, on the ill return I had made for his favours, and so forth, he was pleased to order me back to the gaol, but in a tone that indicated no severity of intention. It gave me much concern, however, that notwithstanding all I had before said, or could now protest on the subject, the governor ordered a young man, in a confidential situation under government, to be dismissed from his office, under an impression that he was privy to the fraud in question. It is true indeed this person, by the injudicious defence he made, was the cause of his own misfortune, and had very nearly, from his statement being at variance with mine, contributed to ruin all my hopes of belief. But the governor, who, though shrewd at times, was not at all times a Solomon,

thought proper to credit my assertion, and reject the evidence of the other party as too improbable to be received.

The next morning early an order came to the prison from his excellency, that I was to be double-ironed, and put to the hardest labour, in common with those incorrigible characters composing what is called the jail-gang. I was in consequence set to work at mending the public-roads, &c. &c., and as I had never before used a heavier tool than a goose-quil I found this penance to bear hard upon me, and repented me of the evil which had brought me to this woeful condition.

CHAPTER XVI.

DRAUGHTED TO CASTLE-HILL. VARIOUSLY EMPLOYED THERE. APPOINTED CLERK TO THE SETTLEMENT. AGAIN NOTICED BY THE GOVERNOR. SUMMONED TO PARRAMATTA BY THE REV. MR MARSDEN APPOINTED MAGISTRATE'S CLERK, AND BEGIN ONCE MORE TO LEAD AN EASY LIFE. PREPARATIONS FOR THE GOVERNOR'S DEPARTURE. MR MARSDEN GIVES ME HOPES OF ACCOMPANYING HIMSELF AND THE GOVERNOR TO ENGLAND IN HIS MAJESTY'S SHIP BUFFALO. MY PLEASING SENSATIONS AT THE PROSPECT OF REVISITING MY NATIVE LAND.

I CONTINUED to labour in double-irons (locked up every night in the jail) for about a month, when a draught of men being ordered to the public agricultural settlement of Castle-hill, twenty-four miles from Sydney, I was included in the number, and about

twenty of us were immediately sent up, escorted by constables. Notwithstanding my condition in the jail-gang was deplorable enough, I felt a greater depression at the thoughts of going to this settlement, a place of which, from every account, I had conceived the most unfavourable idea. Though I suffered much in Sydney, by being obliged to work till three o'clock in so disgraceful a situation, yet when that hour released me from the restraint of the overseer, I was enabled to visit my friends and acquaintances, with whom I enjoyed myself till sunset, when I was obliged to return to the jail, and was locked up for the night. On the contrary, Castle-hill being considered a place of punishment, the prisoners there, who were sent up under circumstances like mine, were not allowed to quit the settlement at all. On arriving at Castle-hill I was first employed at the hoe, which severe labour was so fatiguing to me, that it had nearly the effect of breaking my heart. However, I contrived at times to obtain a lighter employment; and during the term of my remaining at this settlement I had a spell at almost every kind of work peculiar to the place.

After a few weeks had elapsed I prevailed on the superintendent (Mr Knight), who had conceived a partiality for me, to grant me a pass to Parramatta, eight miles distant, and sixteen from Sydney. I had an anxious wish to visit the latter place, but Mr Knight had no power to extend his permission so far, and I knew that application to the magistrates at Parramatta would be fruitless. I therefore determined to hazard a flogging, which would be the consequence of my detection, and to take the wished-for trip without leave or licence. This being Friday, and my week's work done, I accordingly set off, accompanied by two or three others similarly circumstanced, and after six hours' walking arrived at Sydney. Here I lay concealed in the house of a friend till Sunday noon, when I again set out, proceeding with the

utmost caution, and arrived at Castle-hill the same night, conformable to the tenor of my pass. As I experienced nothing but misery and privation during five days in each week, and found such enjoyments in Sydney, I repeated my excursions almost every succeeding Friday, but was not always equally fortunate in my proceedings. The police in Sydney having some information of my visits, were constantly on the look-out for me, and I was at last apprehended, punished with fifty lashes, and sent back in custody of a constable. This did not deter me, however, from running the same risk at several subsequent periods, only redoubling my precautions, and travelling in the night.

I had been about ten months at Castle-hill when the person who had officiated as clerk of the camp (that is, clerk to the superintendent) becoming a free man, quitted the settlement, and I being the only one qualified for such an office, and in some favour with Mr Knight, was promoted to the situation. I now found myself perfectly at ease, and the more so from having been so long kept at hard labour, for which I was but ill adapted. My duty consisted in measuring the daily portion of ground to the different gangs who were breaking up, chipping, &c.; keeping a daily account of the various works carried on; mustering the prisoners every Monday morning; writing passes at the week's end; assisting in the issue of provisions from the store, &c. &c.; and, as these duties were all perfectly familiar to me, I acquitted myself with credit, and, by observing a proper conduct, gained the good will of all parties.

Governor King was frequently in the habit of visiting the settlement, for the purpose of personally inspecting the state of things, and as he had received favourable accounts of my general conduct, he began about this time to notice me in a manner that shewed (I thought) an inclination to restore me to his wonted

favour. But as I had now little more than a year of my time unexpired, and was tolerably comfortable in my new situation, I had so far reconciled myself, that I was but little anxious about a removal, until the hour of my freedom arrived. However, it was destined otherwise, and I underwent another very unexpected change of fortune. In the beginning of August 1806, I was suddenly summoned by a special messenger to attend on the Reverend Mr Marsden, the chief magistrate of Parramatta. I immediately obeyed this summons, of the cause of which I could form no conjecture. On my arrival at the court house, Mr Marsden informed me, that he had sent for me to assist him in taking a muster of the inhabitants of Parramatta, and the surrounding districts, which was to commence that very day, and to form part of a general muster throughout the colony, at this period in progress. I felt myself a little flattered by this distinction, as Mr Marsden had already a clerk, but it seems he was not sufficiently quick, and it was known that I had before frequently officiated on similar occasions. I assured Mr Marsden that I would with pleasure undertake the task, and at the appointed hour we proceeded to business. The muster occupied two whole days, and, being ended, Mr Marsden told me, that his clerk having received a free pardon from governor King, was about to quit the colony in a few days, and that it was his intention to appoint me his successor, promising, if I behaved well, to shew me every indulgence in his power. He then desired I would go back to Castle hill, for the purpose of arranging my affairs, and return as soon as possible to Parramatta. I lost no time in obeying these orders, and the following day again presented myself to Mr Marsden. I was immediately put in possession of the court house, a comfortable brick building, surrounded by a good garden, which was to be my place of residence. I was allowed a govern-

ment servant, and also an old man as housekeeper : the latter being equal to any little services I wanted, I was enabled to permit the former to work for his own living, allowing me a weekly sum for the indulgence, according to the custom of the colony, and as he had hitherto done to my predecessor. In addition to this privilege, I was allowed various fees in the course of my public duties, agreeably to a code or table sanctioned by the magistrates, so that upon the whole my income was sufficient to support me in a manner becoming the respectability of my appointment. Mr Marsden and his colleague in the commission, captain Abbot, were accustomed to preside as a bench of magistrates every Saturday, and sometimes alternately on other days in each week. On these occasions it was my duty to take depositions, write out warrants, commitments, &c. &c. I had besides to keep a general account of all public work in Parramatta, compiled from the reports of the different overseers, &c. In this situation, my knowledge of the law, and my acquaintance with Burn's Justice, proved of the utmost advantage, as there were many cases constantly occurring, in which certain formalities (dispensed with before my appointment) gave an official aspect to the proceedings of the court, and added a solemnity productive of the best effects. Upon the whole, I found myself very comfortably situated, and I had the pleasure to observe that my exertions to acquit myself in the most becoming manner, procured me the consideration such a conduct merited, from the gentlemen under whom I acted.

In the month of October following my removal to Parramatta, the departure of governor King for England, in his majesty's ship *Buffalo*, was publicly announced to take place in the ensuing month, his excellency's successor, governor Bligh, having arrived in the preceding August, on the 13th of which month the latter assumed the supreme command. Since the

period of his supersession, governor King had principally resided at Parramatta, and I was frequently employed by him in arranging his private accounts, transcribing directions to his agents respecting his farms, live stock, &c and various other matters. On these occasions he treated me with the greatest politeness, and appeared to have quite forgot my former delinquencies. One day Mr Marsden questioned me as to the length of time I had to serve, and on my answering eleven months, he distantly hinted that if he could depend on my future good conduct, he was not without hopes of prevailing on governor King to procure a remission of my remaining term, and allow me a passage to England in his own ship; adding, that himself and family were about proceeding to Europe by the same opportunity. This being an event of which I had never entertained the slightest hope, my joyful emotions at the bare idea could only be equalled by my surprise at such an intimation. It immediately struck me that the latter was the result of preconcertation between governor King and Mr Marsden, and that it was at the bottom his excellency's wish to render me this essential service. The sequel proved that my conjectures were not unfounded, for it afterwards appeared that governor King having an incredible number of public documents lying in a state of great confusion, and most of which he wanted copied prior to delivering them up, it was indispensably necessary that he should have an expeditious and experienced clerk, to transcribe and arrange such papers during his voyage home; and it seems he knew of no person more eligible for such an employment than myself. I replied to Mr Marsden, with a warmth and earnestness which convinced him how happy such an arrangement would make me, and assured him of my everlasting gratitude towards himself and the late governor for their consideration; earnestly pressing Mr Marsden to a speedy "consummation" of what I

so "devoutly wished." The anxiety of mind produced in me by this conversation may be conceived by the reader, if he reflects upon the situation in which I was then placed; for, though it was my chief and ardent wish to return to my native land as soon as I became free, yet, as I had no apparent prospect of realizing money enough to pay my passage, and the hardships incidental to working for it would expose me to the most trying severities, such an opportunity as the one I now contemplated could not be too highly appreciated, or too eagerly embraced.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BUFFALO BEING READY FOR SEA, I RECEIVE AN INTIMATION FROM MR MARSDEN, THAT THE LATE GOVERNOR HAS OBTAINED A REMISSION OF MY UNEXPIRED TIME, AND CONSENTS TO TAKE ME HOME AS HIS CLERK. I WAIT ON HIS EXCELLENCY ACCORDINGLY, AND RECEIVE ORDERS TO GO ON BOARD. WE SET SAIL.

THE process of fitting out and victualling the Buffalo, with other causes, delayed the governor's departure for some weeks after the appointed time. At length I received, about the first of February, in a note from Mr Marsden, (who with his family had removed to Sydney, in readiness for embarkation,) the agreeable tidings that governor King had consented to take me on board the Buffalo, in the capacity of his private clerk, and had obtained the sanction of governor Bligh for my departure from the colony. Mr Marsden concluded with advising me to wait on governor King without delay, for the purpose of receiving his com-

mands. I immediately hastened to Sydney, and waited on his excellency ; who, after some conversation, told me that the Buffalo's complement being already full, it was not in his power to put me on the ship's books,* but that he would give me a passage, and himself supply me with provisions. He then inquired if I was encumbered with any debts ; and, on my answering that I owed to individuals about twenty pounds, and to government, for various articles from the stores, about fifteen pounds, his excellency advised me to take measures for settling these accounts, and, having so done, to repair on board with the least possible delay. I now returned to Parramatta, (having first given the usual notice of my departure for publication in the Sydney Gazette,) and applied with diligence to the settlement of my affairs. I was not displeased at the governor's intimation respecting not putting me on the Buffalo's books, because, had he so done, it being war-time, I might have found a difficulty in getting clear of her on our arrival in England ; on the other hand, by going home as a passenger, although I should forego the advantage of pay for the time occupied in our voyage, yet I should be at liberty to quit the ship the moment we anchored. I was not altogether so easy with respect to my debts, as I feared my utmost means were inadequate to their liquidation. 'Tis true, I had a watch, some good clothes, and other effects, which altogether might suffice to discharge my private debts, but then I should much distress myself by the deprival of these useful articles. As to my government debt, I had a secret hope that the generosity of governor King (which was

* Governor King was a post captain in the navy, and principal commander of the Buffalo, having a second (acting) captain under him. The Buffalo had been stationed in N. S. W. ever since the year 1802, and was now relieved by the Porpoise, in which ship governor Bligh arrived.

often conspicuous when his privy purse was not encroached upon) would induce him to assist me in surmounting that difficulty.

I lost not a moment in settling my business at Paramatta, and returning to Sydney with all my worldly goods, I waited on my principal creditor, with whom I managed to square the yards on tolerably easy terms. I was obliged, however, to dispose of nearly all my personal effects before I could satisfy the private demands upon me, retaining only a very limited stock of indispensable articles for my voyage, and one genteel suit of clothes for the purpose of attiring myself on quitting the ship, together with an English half-guinea to bear my expenses from Portsmouth to London. Having taken these measures, I embarked with my chest and bedding on the 5th of February, governor King and Mr Marsden, with their respective families, being already on board. His excellency hearing of my arrival, sent for me to his cabin, and questioned me on the subject of my debts. I informed him, that I had discharged every claim upon me, except the sum that I owed to the crown, and confessed my inability to liquidate that account, without some extension of his excellency's kind assistance. The governor, after some moments' reflection, wrote a short memorandum, which he ordered me to take to Mr commissary Palmer, to whom it was addressed. I accordingly went on shore, and proceeding to the commissary's office, delivered the note, which Mr Palmer having read, handed to one of his clerks, directing him to comply with the tenor of it, which was to the following effect:—"James Vaux (the bearer) having behaved well in the different situations of storekeeper's, secretary's, and magistrate's clerk. I think the small sum he stands indebted to government ought to be remitted him." (Signed) "P. G. K." The clerk having turned to my account in the ledger, gave me credit therein to the amount of my debt, by

an item worded as follows:—"By remuneration for services as clerk, &c." This point being adjusted, I now found myself perfectly disembarassed, and free to depart the country. With a joyful heart, I took leave of my old acquaintances and fellow clerks, with some of whom I spent a convivial evening, and the next day I finally embarked, all things being now in readiness, and the ship only waiting the auspicious breeze. On the 10th of February 1807, was the happy day. At an early hour the ship was crowded with visiters, comprising most of the principal officers of the colony, with their ladies and friends, as well as many respectable inhabitants, all anxious to testify their heartfelt respect towards a departing governor, whose general conduct had gained him universal esteem, and who had, during a government of six years, united the tenderness of a parent with the authority of a chief. The vessel was surrounded with boats, some of which brought various friends of the ship's company, passengers, &c. who came to take a last farewell; others contained spectators of both sexes, attracted by curiosity to witness the interesting scene, as well as to shew their loyalty and good wishes by joining in the parting cheers with which the air resounded as we cleared the heads of the harbour, to which distance most of the boats accompanied us. About three o'clock P. M. the breeze freshening, we quickly gained a good offing, and by half-past four a sudden squall, attended with rain and mist, obscured from us all view of the land, which we beheld no more.

CHAPTER XVIII.

RECEIVE A FREE PARDON FROM THE HANDS OF CAPTAIN (LATE GOVERNOR) KING. ACCOUNT OF OUR PASSAGE HOME. SUFFER A GREAT DEAL FROM THE WANT OF PROVISIONS. LEAKY STATE OF THE SHIP. DOUBLE CAPE HORN. FALL IN WITH AN ENGLISH FRIGATE, BOUND TO THE RIVER PLATE. ARRIVE AT RIO DE JANEIRO.

THE morning after our sailing, captain King (as I shall in future style him) called me into his cabin, and presented me with a free pardon, which, as he rightly observed, was merely a matter of form, as it was probable we should not arrive in England before the expiration of my time. This instrument, though only made out a few days before, was ante-dated the 12th of August 1806, being the day before governor Bligh assumed the command, and was consequently the last official document to which governor King had affixed his signature, and the last public act of his government.

In about a week we made the island of New Zealand, at which it was captain King's intention to have touched, having some live pigs, brought from Port Jackson, for the purpose of presenting to the native chiefs, two of whom had lately visited, and resided for some months in New South Wales; but this kind idea was frustrated by a squall of wind, which took us aback while in sight of the island, and night coming on, it was not considered prudent to approach the land; we therefore hauled our wind and shaped our course to the southward.

Captain King had given orders to the ship's steward, that I should receive his (captain King's) own ration of provisions, on which I was to subsist as well as I could. This quota (according to the usual allowance of the navy) would have been amply sufficient, but by some unaccountable want of management, the *Buffalo*, notwithstanding the length of time occupied in preparation, was at last sent to sea with a very limited supply of provisions; nor was what she really had of the kind or quality invariably allowed in the king's service; the consequence was, that on the very day of our sailing, all hands were put upon half allowance of bread, (that is, half a pound per day,) and the other half of rice: this latter grain was also substituted on banyan days for pease and for oatmeal: of cheese and butter we were also destitute; so that we had not a prospect of much good living before us. Of the rice the crew soon became so much tired, that they ceased to draw any from the purser, leaving it in his hands, to be compensated for at the end of our voyage. The salt meat was also barely adequate to the computed length of our passage to Rio de Janeiro, the first port at which we could hope for a further supply. The reader will allow that half a pound of bread was little enough for a man's daily ration, (being just two biscuits,) but ere we had been six weeks at sea, it was found necessary to reduce the allowance to one-third of a pound; and in a few weeks more it was lowered to one quarter, that is, a biscuit a day! The necessity of these reductions arose from a discovery that the rats, cockroaches, and other vermin, with which the ship was infested, had made a most destructive devastation in the bread room; besides which, a leak in the side had admitted so much salt water, that a great many bags of biscuit were totally spoiled, thereby adding to our distress, which was before sufficiently great. Even the small portion of bread we did receive was scarcely eatable, most of it being very old stores, and full of

maggot, and what was baked in the colony being of a very coarse quality, and every biscuit more or less excavated by the vermin before mentioned. The Buffalo, as I have before shewn; was detained several months for the purpose of being properly victualled, and after all, the purser had been obliged to take a quantity of wheat in casks, for consumption in some shape or other, as it was found inexpedient to wait longer for a further supply of biscuit. This wheat, when the crew were tired of rice, was boiled in lieu of pease, and served out at dinner-time, but it was so unpalatable a mess, that I, among many others, could never stomach it, being thrown into the coppers, dust and all, boiled in stinking water, and when taken up it was nearly as hard as when first put in, and much inferior to the food of pigs in England. The ship's company at length were convinced of their folly in suffering such a mode of cookery, or rather waste, for very few could eat it; and there being luckily a steel mill on board, it was ordered to be put up in the after gun-room, and every mess in the ship, in its turn, ground the next day's portion of wheat over night, and, sifting the meal, produced a bag of tolerable flour, of which the cook composed a certain food for breakfast known among the sailors by the name of *skilligolee*, being, in plain English, paste, similar to that used by the sons of Crispin, only not of quite so thick a consistence: however it was much preferable to the hog-wash before mentioned, and with a little sugar served as an apology for a meal.

I have before observed that I drew captain King's ration of provisions, but he withheld the daily allowance of spirits, forming part of the said ration, which he himself received, and deposited in his private liquor case. It is, however, probable that his lady, who was a rigid economist, was the suggester of this practice. By way of composition, this good lady gave directions that I should receive a dram every day from her own

steward. This trifling indulgence by the by was not ordered me until the severity of the climate compelled me to give a hint on the subject, and after about three weeks' continuance it was put a stop to, on pretence of the stock becoming low. Upon the whole, I suffered a great deal from the scantiness, as well as the quality of my allowance, and the want of certain comforts to which I had been accustomed, particularly during the severe weather which we encountered in our voyage round Cape Horn. It soon appeared that I was not to eat the bread of idleness; I was employed from morning till night in copying and arranging captain King's papers, of which he had several large trunks full. I had also the tuition of his daughter, miss King, who was about twelve years of age, and performed the same duty towards Mr Marsden's two children, as well as a native boy about fourteen, who had been brought up in the family of Mr Marsden. This youth had received the rudiments of a good education, and discovered a most susceptible genius. He could read and write tolerably well, was perfectly docile, and well behaved, and would doubtless have been an object of general admiration, and reflected the highest credit on his humane benefactors, had he ever reached England; but unhappily during our stay at Rio de Janeiro he absconded from the house of his protectors, in consequence of some chastisement for misconduct, and notwithstanding every exertion was used, he could not be recovered before the ship's departure.

To add to our sufferings from the dearth of provisions, we had not been a month at sea before the ship was discovered to be in a very leaky state, and these leaks increased so rapidly, that she at length made above five feet water in the well every four hours.

As we approached the higher latitudes, the climate became every day more intensely cold, and we had continual tempestuous gales for several weeks, but for-

tunately they were from the right quarter, so that we were in general before the wind, and considering our ship was a very heavy sailer, made a pretty rapid progress.

On the 10th of March, having reached a certain degree of longitude, I witnessed the remarkable circumstance of gaining a day, the consequence of circumnavigating the globe. The effect was, that the following day, as well as this, was called in the ship's log the 10th of March, so that we had actually two Tuesdays in one week ! This was a favourable circumstance in one respect to myself and the ship's company, for as Tuesday is a sumptuous day in point of allowance in the navy, beef and pudding being the prescribed fare for dinner, we by this accident feasted two days together ; whereas had it occurred on a Monday, Wednesday, or Friday, two successive banyan (or starvation) days would have been our disinal portion. On our arrival in England our account of time, after this alteration, corresponded exactly with the almanack for the year.

On the 15th of March we rounded Cape Horn, passing within five miles of that inhospitable shore. This point of the American continent is situated in fifty-six degrees of south latitude, and had we passed it in the winter season instead of the autumn, the cold would have been hardly bearable ; as it was, it had the effect of destroying almost every natural production of New South Wales, with some very fine specimens, of which our ship was at first literally crowded, so as to resemble Noah's Ark. There were kangaroos, black swans, a noble emu, and cockatoos, parrots, and smaller birds without number ; all of which, except one cockatoo, which was carefully nursed by its mistress, and half a dozen swans, fell victims to the severity of the weather. The latter birds, indeed, being natives of Van Diemen's Land, which is a colder climate than Port Jackson, were of a hardy

nature, and survived our long and tedious voyage. On their arrival in England they were sent by captain King as a present to the royal managerie in Kew gardens.

In our passage round Cape Horn we had frequent storms of snow; a native of New Zealand, who had been for some time on board the Buffalo, and was a very active intelligent fellow, expressed the utmost surprise on observing a phenomenon, which in the happy clime of his nativity is never experienced, and in the first emotions of his admiration exclaimed, "Look, look, white rain, white rain!" This man would have been an object of curiosity in England, for he had a very handsome person, and was punctured or tattooed in a most fanciful and extraordinary manner from head to foot, including his face, which was covered with ornamental devices; but unhappily he contracted the small-pox, which, notwithstanding all possible attention, carried him off before we arrived at the Brazils.

I must not omit a remarkable and awful phenomenon which occurred during this part of our passage. In the middle of a tempestuous night, a sudden concussion was heard, resembling the report of a cannon close to us; it alarmed three parts of the people who were below asleep, as well as the watch on deck; and the general opinion was at first, that a ship was close aboard us. Every one hurried upon deck, when the cause was found to have been what is called a fire ball, which had been probably attracted by the spindle at the mast-head, for it made a rapid descent down the main-mast, exploding at the break of the quarter-deck; the concussion had knocked down a quarter-master who stood near the binnacle, and two men who were at the wheel. The former was for some minutes insensible, but happily they were no further injured than by the fright. Captain King was instantly on deck, with his usual promptness, and fearing the effects of

the fire, gave orders to cover the magazine scuttle with wet swabs; then to sound the pump-well, for some were in dread of the ball having gone through the ship's bottom; however, it appeared the ship made only the usual quantity of water, and that no real injury was sustained. Another night, as we were scudding before a heavy gale of wind, and a tremendous sea rolling after us, we had the misfortune to be pooped, as the phrase is, by a wave or sea striking our stern, which stove in the cabin windows, and rushing impetuously through the cabin and along the main deck, bore down all before it. Luckily no farther damage was done than breaking the windows, which rendered it necessary to put up the dead-lights during the remainder of the passage.

When within a day or two's sail of the river Plate, as we were running down the coast of Brazil, we fell in with a frigate, which on hailing we found to be his majesty's ship *Thisbe*, bound to Buenos Ayres, having on board general Whitelocke and his staff. This officer was going to conduct the attack upon the city above mentioned, as well as upon Monte Video, both belonging to the Spaniards. A formidable expedition had been fitted out in England for the service, and a numerous army was already collected in the river Plate, waiting the arrival of general Whitelocke. Captain King complimented this officer with a visit on board the *Thisbe*, which the latter returned. On arriving abreast of the river Plate, the *Thisbe* parted from us, steering for the entrance of that river, and we continued our course along shore. In a few days we came in sight of Rio de Janeiro, but were becalmed for two days in sight of the port. At length, on the 22d of May, we entered that beautiful harbour, after a most hazardous and blowing passage of fifteen weeks. It was remarkable, that on the day before we got in, the last biscuit was issued to the ship's company, and the last cask of salt meat we possessed was

broached; so that had our passage been longer protracted, we must have endured still greater privations.

CHAPTER XIX.

ACCOUNT OF MY ADVENTURES AT SAN SEBASTIAN.
FORM ACQUAINTANCE WITH A PORTUGUESE FAMILY. THEIR AFFECTION FOR ME. OVERTURES MADE TO INDUCE MY STAY IN SOUTH AMERICA. THE SHIP BEING REPAIRED AND VICTUALLED, WE RE-EMBARK AND SAIL FOR EUROPE.

ON coming to an anchor in the usual situation, we were boarded by several persons of distinction, accompanied by an intelligent gentleman as interpreter; after a conference between whom and captain King, it was determined that the latter should without delay address an official letter to the viceroy, stating the causes of his putting into that port, the nature of his wants, and other particulars. Captain King accordingly sketched a draught, which I was employed to transcribe. This letter explained to his excellency (the viceroy) the leaky and disabled state of his majesty's ship; her want of provisions and water, &c. &c. and concluded with expressing captain King's willingness to compliment the Portuguese flag, by firing a salute of fifteen guns, provided the viceroy would pledge himself to return an equal number. It is to be observed, that among the Portuguese, everything is conducted with the utmost formality; and as they are highly jealous of foreigners, captain King (whose experience was very great in such matters) was particularly cautious not to give any cause of offence. or

to fail in due respect ; at the same time that he was determined to support the honour of his own nation, by stipulating for an equal interchange of ceremony, conformable to the etiquette of the service. No foreign vessels are suffered to proceed beyond a certain distance within the harbour, without special permission. One object of request in the letter was, therefore, that the Buffalo might be allowed to anchor above the Island of Cobres (or Snake Island), where she could have the benefit of smooth water to undergo the necessary repairs. Other objects were, to be furnished with shipwrights, caulkers, &c. to have a new rudder (our own being sprung) prepared in the dock yard, as also a new boltsprit from the same cause ; permission to land and house the rigging and other stores in convenient receptacles ; a daily supply of fresh meat, vegetables, &c. and several other similar demands. To this letter a most gracious answer was returned, assuring captain King of the fullest compliance with his requisitions, and expressing every sentiment of friendship for the English nation, and of respect for his person. His excellency's letter concluded with the usual compliment of the Portuguese—" God preserve your excellency many years." At the same time was transmitted a long table of rules and ceremonies, to be observed by our ship's company, &c. These rules were promulgated by captain King, who ordered the strictest attention to be paid thereto. They related to the times and places of landing from boats ; the behaviour of the English when on shore ; respect to be paid to the Catholic religion and its ministers, &c. &c. Among other injunctions it was expected that every Englishman on passing a church should move his hat, and pay the same compliment to the image of the Virgin Mary, which you encounter at the corner of every principal street, enclosed in a sort of cupboard with a glass door, and silk curtains drawn open on each side.

These cupboards are affixed to the wall, on a level with the first floor windows of the house, and at night a lamp is kept burning over them, which has a very pretty effect. It was also required that every person, on meeting the host (which is a grand procession of priests, friars, &c. followed by an immense rabble) should bend on one knee, and so remain till the procession was past. The priests, on this occasion carry gold or silver images of our Saviour and the saints, accompanied by musical instruments, flags, numerous lighted flambeaux, and every other device to render the scene at once grand, solemn, and impressive. In fact, I witnessed various processions of a religious nature during my stay here, scarcely a night passing without one or more; but it is foreign to my purpose to enter into more minute details. It being the first Catholic country I was ever in, I was struck with admiration at the grandeur of the churches, the nightly exhibitions of fire-works, illuminations, ringing of bells, and other demonstrations of religious respect, or what we should call superstition. But I am of opinion there is much policy in carrying these rites to such an extravagant pitch, for the population of this city being composed of negroes, in the proportion, I take it, of at least nineteen to one white, and the majority of the former being slaves, the splendour and enchanting effects of music, paintings, fire-works, processions, and other devices, together with the implicit devotion in which they are brought up to the Catholic religion, keep their minds in a continual state of resigned subjection, amuse their senses, and leave neither time nor inducement to attempt, by acts of rebellion, a release from their habitual bondage.

To resume my narrative: all preliminaries being settled to the satisfaction of both parties, captain King, a few days after our arrival, hired a commodious and handsome house, ready-furnished, in a

pleasant part of the town, to which he with his whole family removed. I, of course, accompanied them, highly delighted at the prospect of viewing this beautiful city, and observing the manners and customs of its inhabitants, from which I anticipated the greatest gratification. Mr Marsden and his family also occupied a genteel house, and, in fact, all the passengers (of whom we had a good number) quitted the ship, which was intended to undergo a thorough repair.

During our residence ashore, I had much leisure time, which I employed in walking throughout the city and suburbs, viewing the churches, convents, and other objects deserving of notice; and I endeavoured to acquire, by every means opportunity offered, some little knowledge of the Portuguese language. As the latter bears a great affinity to the Latin and French, I succeeded beyond my hopes in this object, by virtue of which I was enabled to extend my inquiries, and to interchange personal civilities with many of the inhabitants.

In the street in which we resided, I had frequently observed an old lady, together with three young ones, sitting at the door of a genteel looking house, employed, according to their custom, in weaving lace, with a number of bobbins and a cushion placed before them. This employment serves both as an amusement and a source of profit to the younger branches of families. They were seated cross-legged on the floor of the parlour, the door of which (composed of lattice work) was open for the benefit of air. In the evenings I generally saw them seated in the same manner, in conversation; the old lady turning over her beads, of which a string or rosary with a cross suspended to the end of it was hung upon her wrist, and appeared to receive her devout attention. Having repeatedly passed this interesting group, and fancying that they noticed me with some emotion, I ventured to compliment them *en passant*, which courtesy they

returned with evident pleasure; and every succeeding salutation produced a longer dialogue than the preceding; till at length the old lady one evening invited me to enter, and sit down; but not on the floor, for they had chairs, as well as other furniture, of an elegant but simple kind. These good ladies put several questions to me respecting the English governor (as they styled him), my situation in his family, name, &c. I informed them, as fully as I could find words for, and telling them my name in Portuguese, they ever afterwards called me *senor Jacobe*, it not being their custom to use surnames. I had the pleasure to find that we understood each other tolerably well, and gathered from them, that the old lady was called *senora donna Joaquina Roza de Iacè*; (as the Vicar of Wakefield says, I love to give the name at full length;) she was the widow of a military officer in the Portuguese service, and enjoyed a pension from the government, upon which, and the earnings of her accomplished daughters, she lived in a private but genteel manner: the latter were named *donna Anna Precioza*, *donna Joaquina*, and *donna Joanina*. The mother was a most agreeable woman, courteous and affable to a degree, but seemingly a strong devotee to her religion. The daughters were beautiful girls, evidently of a susceptible disposition; but, like the Portuguese in general, very reserved, and tenacious of their sex's dignity. They pressed me to partake of some coffee, which was served with much ceremony by a female negro; and after two or three hours most agreeably spent, I took leave, with an earnest injunction to repeat my visit.

From this time hardly a day passed without my calling on this worthy family, and at every visit we parted with a stronger regard for each other. I felt a growing sentiment in favour of the eldest daughter (*Anna*.) and I ingratiated myself with the mother, by warmly praising the Catholic religion, shewing my

respect by kissing the cross attached to her beads, and every other means in my power. In a few days I became, as it were, one of the family, visiting them at all hours, and experiencing the kindest welcome. The ladies took a pleasure in improving my knowledge in their language, and in return requested me to teach them my own. At this period there were very few English persons in the Brazils; but the inhabitants, in general, evinced the greatest fondness for our nation; so that not the meanest of our ship's company could walk the streets without being gratified with hearing the exclamation of "*Sta bon Inglise*," (very good Englishman,) from the mouths of passengers, both men, women, and children. Myself and other persons, whose appearance was at all respectable, were also very courteously saluted by the females, who stand for hours peeping through the lattice windows of the houses, which are half opened, so as to give them a view, and although most of these diffident ladies close the lattice and retire with precipitation, on the approach of a male stranger, yet many of them suffered me to hold a conversation for a few minutes; and I sometimes prevailed so far as to obtain one of their fair hands to kiss, a mark of great favour and condescension, even to their common acquaintances.

Captain King received every possible mark of respect both public and private, during his residence in this city. Whenever he appeared abroad in an open chaise, (which he hired by the month,) or on horseback, the military guard at every public post which he passed were turned out to pay him the same honours as are usually rendered to the viceroy himself. The latter officer also shewed him every attention, frequently exchanging visits with him, lending him his own horses for a ride, &c. Most of the principal inhabitants paid their respects to Mrs King, and invited her to various public and private entertain-

ments. The Portuguese excel in music, particularly the violin and bass viol; and there were frequently large parties of amateurs at our house, who formed a most delightful evening concert. This is, in fact, the custom of all people of fashion there, who, instead of meeting for the purpose of gaming, as in London, adopt this much more laudable and rational mode of amusement.

I observed, as I traversed the city, that a number of bonfires were lighted in various streets, as soon as it grew dusk, almost every evening, which were surrounded by children, negroes, and others, rejoicing until a late hour. As these fires were never twice in the same spot, I was at a loss to understand their meaning, until I at length ascertained that they were in celebration of the birth-days of children. The custom of observing such days differs, however, from our own country; for, instead of taking place on the anniversary of the child's nativity, the observation is confined to the festival of that particular saint after whom the child is named; for instance, on St Anna's day, all persons who have a daughter called Anna, celebrate the same by regaling their friends, and having a bonfire before their door. As almost every day in the year is dedicated to a male or female saint, whose name is borne by some hundreds of children, these bonfires are, of course, frequent and numerous. The effect of them is both lively and gratifying, especially to those who know their cause; but many of the streets being extremely narrow, and some of the fires very large, I have been frequently much embarrassed to effect a passage, in which attempt I was sometimes in danger of being scorched by the intense heat reflected from the stone walls of which the houses are composed.

Another object of my attention was the slave-market, which is held on the arrival of a Guinea ship, in the suburbs of the city. These unfortunate beings

are chained together, and driven to the scene of this disgraceful traffic, where they are sold like cattle or sheep in Smithfield. A healthy youth of about fifteen will produce from about thirty to fifty pounds, this being considered the most advantageous age at which a slave can be purchased. The condition of this unhappy class of persons is, however, much more tolerable in this city than a stranger would suppose. Most of the inhabitants possess a male or female, (some several) exclusive of those employed in household affairs. These superfluous slaves are sent out in a morning to ply for hire on their owner's account, and obtain as much as they can by their labour; the majority of the women confine themselves to carrying water from the fountains, which they cry as the vendors of milk do in London; and on being hailed, they stop and empty their vessel, for which they receive a vintain, (about three halfpence); they then return to the nearest fountain to replenish. I could not help being surprised at the large size of the vessels in which they carry this water on their heads; they are a kind of wooden casks, some of them holding at least ten gallons.

Having mentioned the public fountains (with which this city abounds) it may not be amiss to describe them. There being but few springs in the town, water is conveyed by means of a noble brick aqueduct (communicating with others) from a distance of several miles through the interior, over the summits of many high hills, and being distributed throughout the city, it supplies a fountain in most of the principal streets. These fountains are handsomely constructed of stone, having a large cistern into which the purest water is constantly running from the beaks of several ducks, geese, or other birds, which are of cast metal, and well executed. As the trade of water-carrying furnishes employment for many hundreds of negro women, and their continual resort to the foun-

tains would occasion much confusion and quarrelling, a soldier is placed in attendance to preserve order, and the women seat themselves in a row on a long bench fixed on purpose, where they are obliged to wait for their turn to fill. It is a curious and interesting sight to observe these harmless and industrious creatures conversing with each other, and smoking their pipes, while they patiently await the sentinel's intimation to approach. The incessant prattle of their tongues may be heard by a passenger long before he reaches the spot, and adds to the novelty of the scene.

The negroes I saw here, the majority of whom are natives, born of those imported from Africa or of their descendants, are upon the whole the most comely race of blacks I ever met with. The men wear coarse jackets and trowsers, the women a sort of gown of blue cloth; but their linen is always remarkably white, of a fine texture, and beautifully wrought with ornamental work about the sleeves and bosom. They have also bracelets both on the wrists and ancles, and ear-rings, all of the purest gold. Both sexes are very cleanly in their persons, and of a most docile and gentle disposition.

By the kindness of my worthy friends, the ladies, I obtained frequent admission to the Opera, as it is called, though the pieces I saw appeared to be principally comedies and farces, with scarcely any vocal music. As I could not understand the plot, or dialogue, my chief satisfaction was in contemplating the *coup d'œil*, which was very striking. The house is about the size of our little theatre in the Haymarket; the pit is solely occupied by the male sex, but the boxes are filled with beautiful women, dressed in the most elegant and bewitching manner, and adorned with brilliant ear-rings, bracelets, &c. The viceroy has an elegant box in the centre of the front tiers, so as to be immediately facing the stage, and to be seen by the whole audience. The performance is never

suffered to commence till his arrival, which is sometimes protracted; and on his excellency's entrance the whole of the spectators rise to testify their respect for his person. The admission to the pit is only a petack (two shillings.) The boxes are engaged by parties, at the expense of about twelve shillings each, whether the party is large or small; and there is no gallery. The music is excellent and the band numerous.

Were I to attempt a minute description of the magnificent churches, convents, and other buildings, the numerous processions, public rejoicings, &c.; the beautiful gardens, romantic walks, and other objects worthy of the most scrupulous attention, which I met with in this rich and flourishing city, as well as the various customs and manners peculiar to its inhabitants, I should swell this work much beyond the limits I have prescribed; but as I am inadequate to the task, I shall leave such a subject to some abler pen; and as I only profess to write an account of my own adventures, shall resume the thread of my narrative.

I was so much delighted with all I saw, and found the climate so congenial to my constitution, that I could have been content to have spent the rest of my life in South America; and hinting as much to my kind friends, the old lady seriously pressed me to that measure, assuring me of her protection and interest, together with that of her friends, who were numerous and respectable. She even pledged herself to procure me a salary of one doubloon (about 3*l.* 12*s.*) per month, at the first onset, as clerk in a mercantile house, which would be increased as I acquired the Portuguese language. But that longing desire to revisit my native country, which is predominant in the breast of every Englishman, together with a wish to see once more my beloved relations to whom I owed so much, prevailed over every other consideration; and I declined, but with a proper sense of

gratitude, these flattering offers of favour and service.

Since my departure from Portsmouth, in 1801, I had not heard a syllable of or from any of my friends in England, and though it was probable that my dear benefactors in S—— had ere this period paid the debt of nature, I felt a secret hope that they might still survive, and that from the favourable situation in which I stood with captain King I might, at no very distant period, find myself enabled to contribute some little assistance towards rendering the evening of their lives happy. It was my firm determination never again to swerve from a course of rectitude; and I had the fullest confidence that the late governor, my patron, would procure me the means of adhering to so laudable a resolution. How fatally I was mistaken, how uncertain are the favours of the great, will be seen in a future chapter.

The Buffalo having been as effectually repaired as circumstances would admit, and a tolerable supply of provisions received on board, every preparation was made for prosecuting our voyage, and a day appointed for sailing. As the latter period approached, I redoubled my respectful attentions to the worthy family in the strada de los Mongares (or Monkey street) and they every day gave stronger proofs of their concern at my approaching departure. The day at length arrived, and I waited on them to take a final leave. On this occasion many tears were shed on their part, and I confess my sensibility was such that I involuntarily caught the soft infection. I obtained the favour of a warm embrace from them all, and the young ladies condescended to deviate from their usual strict decorum by suffering me to imprint some ardent kisses on their charming lips. The mother appeared a little disconcerted at this indulgence, but her affection for me prevented any expressions of displeasure; she herself presented me her cheek with a very good

grace. I must here observe, that the Portuguese ladies do not allow even their lovers, before marriage, a greater licence than kissing the hand; this intimation was given me on my first acquaintance with donna Joaquina, by that worthy matron herself, with a very serious air, as she discovered, I suppose, that I evinced too much warmth in my attention to her lovely daughters. After numerous repetitions of "Adieu" on my side, and of "Dios guarda, mio Amigo,"—God preserve you, my friend,—on that of these amiable females, I was obliged to tear myself abruptly from them; and with a heart overcharged with grief and tenderness, I hastened to the boat, which conveyed myself and the few other persons remaining on shore to the ship, which was then under weigh, and, the breeze freshening, we with difficulty got alongside her, when abreast of Fort Santa Cruz, near the entrance of the Rio de Janeiro, and just as the Buffalo was saluting that battery. In about an hour afterwards we cleared the Heads; the same evening (August the 12th, 1807) we lost sight of the coast of Brazil, and proceeded on our course for Europe.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SHIP BECOMES AS LEAKY AS BEFORE. ALL HANDS IN TURN AT THE PUMPS. MEANS ADOPTED TO REDUCE THE LEAKS. I OFFEND THE LATE GOVERNOR, WHO ORDERS ME BEFORE THE MAST. FALL IN WITH THE THISBE A SECOND TIME, IN COMPANY WITH SEVERAL TRANSPORTS. UNHAPPY FATE OF ONE OF THEM. ARRIVE AT SPITHEAD.

HAVING resumed our voyage with a favouring breeze, and the ship being, to all appearance, tight and seaworthy, with a pretty ample supply of wet and dry provisions, our prospects were now a little more cheering ; and I looked forward with innate satisfaction to the moment when I should set my foot on English ground, free from the horrors attending a state of bondage, and at liberty to realize the ideas I had formed of atoning to society and to my own conscience for the manifold errors of my past life.

We had however the mortification to find that the repairs the ship had undergone at Rio de Janiero, had only produced a temporary effect ; for shortly after leaving that port, the ship again began to leak, and in a few days made as much water as before. The consequence was that all hands, except officers, were obliged to take their turn at the pumps, and it was only by pumping her out every watch that she could be kept free. I, of course, took my spell at this necessary but fatiguing labour during the day, without murmuring ; but I was not disturbed in the night, which, indeed, I considered would have been unfair, as I was on duty all day. The carpenter found, on

inspection, that the principal leak was occasioned by some part of the stem being loose, where there was a large aperture some feet under water. Every exertion was made, by lightening her forwards, and applying what is termed a fothering mat to her bows, to remedy this evil, but without effect; for the working of the ship occasioned every particle of the stuffing used on such occasions to wash out immediately. This expedient, indeed, at first, promised to succeed to admiration, for it decreased the leak from sixteen to ten inches an hour; but the experiment was made in a calm, and the first rough weather undid all that had been done. It was now discovered that certain parts of the stem, called the fore-hoods, were loose, which occasioned the principal leak; and this was so far under water, that it was impossible to repair the defect while the ship was afloat. In fact, she was altogether in a very decayed state, being an old ship, and having endured much severe service; so that having now a voyage of three months before us, and reason to expect bad weather, as we should approach the English channel in the winter season, those who were best able to form an opinion entertained serious doubts of the ship's capability to perform the voyage; however, these doubts were not suffered to transpire publicly, and every precaution which the experience of captain King and his officers could dictate was made use of. The stem of the vessel being the most defective part, was first secured by passing very strong ropes over her bows, and under her keel, which were then boused taut athwart the fore-castle, and there made fast, in order to lash her bows together; for some fears existed that, by the violent working of the ship in a head sea, her bows would absolutely part asunder! That she might be strained as little as possible, it was also determined not to carry a press of sail on the bolt-sprit when sailing on a wind. In this manner we continued our

course for several weeks, without any incident worthy of notice ; we had upon the whole pretty favourable winds, but as we approached the equator they were interrupted by occasional calms.

On the 17th of September we crossed the equinoc-tial line, with the usual ceremonies, in which every officer and passenger cordially joined, and not a single person (the ladies and captain King excepted) escaped a complete ducking. The weather being delightfully fine, with a light and favourable breeze, every one was in high spirits, and the rites of Neptune having been celebrated in due form, a plentiful allowance of grog succeeded, which, by wetting the inside, made ample amends for the salt-water baptism which all hands had mutually and liberally bestowed on each other, without respect to rank or persons. This was a remarkable day with me, for on this day my original term of transportation expired. This event naturally produced a train of reflections in my mind. I took a retrospect of the miseries and vicissitudes I had undergone within the last seven years, and I returned fervent thanks to heaven for my deliverance from exile, and for the unlimited freedom which I expected shortly to regain. But, alas ! I was soon to experience another reverse, which, as it was both unexpected and un-merited, fell with the greater weight upon me : and thus it happened.

Hitherto, as I have before observed, I was not called upon in the night to take my spell at the pumps, but a few days after our crossing the line, by what accident I know not, I was desired by the boatswain's mate of the watch to turn out in the middle of a wet and windy night, and pump ship. As remonstrance with such a fellow as this would have availed nothing, I complied ; but the next day took an opportunity of acquainting captain King, and requested he would give directions that I should not be disturbed in future. To my great surprise, how-

ever, he informed me that I had been called upon by his express orders, and that he was ignorant till that very night of my being excused from the duty of pumping, but had taken for granted that I always took my spell. I replied to this by submitting, in the most respectful terms, that as I was employed in writing, &c. from morning till night, and also assisted in pumping the ship every watch, it was but fair that I should sleep every night, as all persons under the denomination of "idlers" invariably do in king's ships. Captain King rejoined that the emergency of the case required every one to assist; that he had given orders to have no idler or other person excused, and that he should therefore insist on my compliance. I observed that he grew warm towards the end of this conference, though I had preserved the respect due to him in all I had said; however, as I was conscious of being in the right, I ventured to hint that the situation in which I stood, being only a passenger, not belonging to the ship, receiving neither pay nor even the allowance of spirits common to the meanest cabin-boy in the service, and which was essentially necessary to support the united hardships of labour and inclement weather: that all these considerations might, I submitted, entitle me to some distinction from the class of persons called idlers, who actually belonged to the ship; and I concluded with an intimation that the emergency of the case could not be so great as that my feeble assistance could not be dispensed with, as the ship was always freed from water with ease in half an hour, and not one of his (captain King's) domestic servants, who were stout able men (five or six in number) and all receiving pay from the ship, were ever called upon at all in the night, and but rarely in the day. The justice of my remonstrances appeared to have exasperated captain King, who was of a very irascible temper, and he at length worked himself up into a violent rage, the consequence of

which was (as usual with him) a torrent of abuse; and, as I knew by experience that it was in vain to attempt pacifying him when in this mood, I quitted the cabin, and retired to my berth between decks. About half an hour after, as I was sitting on my chest ruminating on the unpleasant situation in which I was placed, and heartily wishing for the moment which was to free me from a state of dependence, I was accosted by a master's mate, who informed me it was captain King's orders that I should do my duty in the larboard watch of the after-guard, and that I was to be mustered with the watch at eight o'clock the same night. I now clearly saw the malevolence of captain King's designs, and the illiberal advantage he was about to take of my helpless and dependent situation. I nevertheless cheerfully obeyed his orders, and that night kept what is termed the first watch (from eight to twelve), two hours of which I was stationed at the lee-wheel. At twelve o'clock I retired to my hammock, and was no more interrupted till eight the next morning, soon after which I was summoned to the cabin of captain Houston, the acting commander of the *Buffalo* under captain King, who, on appearing before him, inquired abruptly, "if I chose to enter?" I was not surprised at this question, as I had foreseen in what manner captain King intended to act, in order to place me more immediately in his power, and to give him an authority over me, which as I was before situated he did not possess. Being therefore prepared for such a question, and knowing the nature of the service, I answered captain Houston in the affirmative. The latter then ordered me to attend the captain's clerk, and get myself duly entered on the ship's books. This I accordingly did, and now found myself suddenly placed in the capacity of a common sailor on board a king's ship: and it being war time, I had before me the disheartening prospect of being drafted, on our arrival in England, on board some other ship

(without a probable chance of once setting my foot on shore) and of being perhaps immediately ordered abroad to some foreign station from which I might not return for several years. My motive for voluntarily entering was this; I was aware that had I refused to do so, it was in the power of captain King to press me against my will, and I doubt not but such was his intention. In the latter case I should have been entered as a pressed man, which might have operated at a future day against my obtaining leave to go ashore, and by that means effect my escape; whereas I was now entered as a volunteer, and became entitled to a small bounty. I am persuaded the reader will view this conduct of captain King's in a very unfavourable light; as I had really been guilty of no crime, it was taking a most cruel and illiberal advantage of the power he had over me. Having released me from a state of banishment, and taken me into his service on the terms he did, without an immediate compensation, he had of course left me every reason to expect, not only my liberty at the end of the voyage, but also his future countenance and protection. Besides, the reader will remember that he had declined putting me on the ship's books when I first joined her at Port Jackson, in which case I should have had nine month's pay to receive on my subsequent arrival in England, and should have also had a daily allowance of spirits during the passage, for want of which I had suffered much in the cold climate and severe weather we encountered; instead of which, and after I had actually become a freeman by servitude, he had forced me into what may be termed a second bondage, almost equally irksome with the first, and that too when within six weeks of the end of our voyage. However, as I am of opinion with Shakspeare, that

“Things without remedy should be without regard,”

I bore up with fortitude against this unexpected reverse of fortune; and, conscious of its being unmerited, made no attempt to avert the blow by mean submission, to which I could not stoop. I therefore cheerfully took my watch on deck, and, when not so engaged, amused myself below with a book, or in ruminating (as usual with me) on the instability of human affairs, and the vicissitudes of my own life in particular. It was not the least of my consolations in this distress that I received every day at noon half a pint of excellent rum, with a dram of which I fortified myself occasionally during the night watches; for as we approached the channel of Old England, we once more experienced a sudden change of climate and the weather became intensely cold.

About a fortnight after the event I have just related, captain King, finding I was perfectly reconciled to my new duty, and that I offered no apology, as he perhaps expected I would, sent for me one morning, and ordered me to attend in the cabin every day at nine o'clock, for the purpose of writing as usual. As I did **not** conceive myself justified in refusing, I complied, and paid every attention to his commands. The boatswain's mates, understanding how I was again employed, desisted from calling me up to pump ship for several nights; when by some means captain King hearing of this fact, actually gave orders that I should regularly turn out as well as the other idlers. This I considered such a proof of his determined wish to oppress and harass me, that I ventured a second remonstrance on the subject; when he again fell into a violent rage, and cautioned me not to offend him by a repetition of (what he termed) my insolence, reminding me that it was now in his power to flog me, though it was not before!

He concluded with saying, that he left it to my choice either to write for him during the day, and take my turn at pumping in the night, or do my

duty before the mast entirely, and keep my watch in common with the rest of the crew. I made no hesitation in replying, that, with his permission, I should prefer doing my duty on deck. To this he assenting, I made my bow and withdrew. Here ended my functions in the clerical capacity with captain King. From this day I never wrote a line for him; and thus was I rewarded for my past services. To shew the inconsistency of this treatment, I will just quote a line from the pardon granted me by himself, when governor of New South Wales. In documents of this description it is indispensably required to state the grounds, or motives, which induce the governor to exercise the power vested in him by his majesty's instructions. The blank left for that purpose was thus filled up; "I, Philip Gidley King, esquire, captain general, &c. &c., taking into consideration the good conduct of James Vaux, and to enable him to serve as my clerk on board his majesty's ship *Buffalo*, Do hereby absolutely remit," &c.

Just before we entered the channel, we had the singular fortune to fall in a second time with the *Thisbe* frigate, in company with three sail of transports. On speaking, we ascertained that the latter vessels had on board a part of the army lately under the command of general Whitelocke in the *Rio de la Plata*, and who had survived the ill-managed and fatal attack upon Buenos Ayres. We also learned that the general himself had been put under arrest for his deficiency and misconduct on that occasion, and was now on his voyage home to answer for the same. Captain King now represented to the agent on board one of these transports, the distressed state of the *Buffalo*, and requested the aid of some soldiers to assist in pumping her, as the leaks daily grew more alarming. Forty privates were accordingly put on board us, and we continued our voyage in company with the transports, the *Thisbe* having outsailed us.

About the 5th of November we made the land, which proved the coast of Cornwall, near Falmouth. We proceeded along shore to the eastward, and on the eighth came to an anchor at Spithead (after a passage of nine months from Port Jackson) in company with two of the transports, but the third was missing. We had afterwards the melancholy information that this vessel (the *John* and *Elizabeth*) had been wrecked during the preceding night, having struck upon some rocks in consequence of her keeping too near the shore; and, it blowing a fresh gale, she went to pieces, when upwards of three hundred persons unhappily perished.

CHAPTER XXI.

CAPTAIN KING LEAVES THE SHIP, WHICH PROCEEDS TO PORTSMOUTH HARBOUR. MY MELANCHOLY REFLECTIONS ON MY CONFINEMENT TO THE SERVICE. PREPARATIONS FOR PAYING OFF THE *BUFFALO*. EMPLOYED BY THE PURSER IN ARRANGING THE SHIP'S BOOKS. WRITE TO LONDON, AND RECEIVE AN ANSWER FROM MY MOTHER. OBTAIN LEAVE TO GO ASHORE VERY UNEXPECTEDLY, AND EFFECT MY ESCAPE THROUGH THE FRIENDLY AID OF A TOTAL STRANGER.

THE anchor was no sooner down than the cutter was hoisted out, in which captain King went ashore, and immediately proceeded post to London. The following day the *Buffalo* weighed, and sailed into Portsmouth harbour, where she was lashed alongside a hulk near the shore, and preparations instantly made for clearing and dismantling her, preparatory to her

survey and expected condemnation. Those persons who had obtained a passage on various accounts, and were not on the ship's books, were now permitted to disembark, and depart to their respective homes. I now felt the full weight of the misery in which I was involved. After an absence of nearly seven years from my native land, to enjoy once more the sight of that much-loved spot, and when within a hundred yards of the shore, to be debarred from a nearer approach, was mortifying in the extreme, and my situation could only be compared to that of Tantalus in the Heathen mythology. The purser was now busily intent upon making up the Buffalo's books, to be transmitted to the Navy office, previous to her being paid, and her crew drafted into other ships. As these accounts were extensive, and required both care and expedition, Mr Sherard, the purser, requested that I would assist the captain's clerk of the ship in their arrangement, for which he obtained the sanction of captain Houston, promising to reward me for my trouble. I was now excused from all other duty, and immediately set about the required task with alacrity, conceiving hopes that I might by this compliance facilitate my grand object of escaping from the ship. By dint of unremitting assiduity we completed the whole of the accounts in about a fortnight, to the satisfaction of the purser, and I had no sooner acquitted myself of this duty than captain Houston requested I would bring up his journal, which was many months in arrear. I gladly undertook this service, from the same motives as before, and now wrote from morning till night in the cabin, captain King and his family having totally quitted the ship, and taken lodgings in Portsmouth, as had also captain Houston and his lady. The latter officer came on board daily, and was highly pleased at the progress I made in his journal. Captain King also came on board occasionally, but did not deign to notice me, and I preserved the same strangeness towards him.

Soon after our arrival, I had written to an aunt in London for information respecting my father and other relations. About this time I received, in consequence, a letter from my mother, informing me that my father and grandmother had been deceased about two years, and that my venerable grandfather was still living at S—— in health and spirits; she added that herself and my two sisters were residing in Middle row, Holborn, and should feel inexpressibly happy at seeing me again. My whole thoughts were now turned to the object of getting ashore, but the *quo modo* was to be considered, and of this I could form no idea. I could not swim; I had no money to bribe a waterman to fetch me away; and of gaining my liberty I had little or no hopes. I still continued assiduous in writing the journal for captain Houston, and I had reason to build upon some indulgence from the first lieutenant Mr Oxley,* should it rest with him to grant leave of absence, as I had occasionally written his log during the voyage, and he had been pleased to shew me many marks of kindness.

After the pay-books were completed and sent up to London, I one day had some conversation with a respectable looking woman, who attended the ship with a bun-boat, and supplied the sailors with necessaries on the credit of their approaching pay, which was considerable, the ship having been six years stationed in New South Wales. As this woman appeared to possess some sensibility, I ventured to represent to her the distress I was in at my confinement to the service, and particularly my fears that I should not obtain leave to visit my friends before I was sent to sea again. The good woman, whose name was B—y, had sufficient penetration to perceive my drift, and that I wanted to take French leave of an English man-of-war. After expatiating on the risk she should

incur in case of a discovery, and many injunctions of secrecy, she declared her willingness to assist me as far as lay in her power, as she had, she said, children of her own, and pitied my situation. She then advised me to pack up a suit of clothes (which I informed her I had by me) and commit them to her care, saying, that she would take them privately to her lodgings, to which she directed me, and that I must next contrive to get ashore on duty, or by any other means, when I should immediately come to her, and she would assist me in my further proceedings. Having treated this worthy creature with a glass of grog, and overwhelmed her with thanks for her disinterested kindness (for such it certainly was) I hastened to put up my clothes, consisting of a genteel black coat, boots, &c. which I had preserved for the purpose, and on her quitting the ship she concealed these articles among her merchandise without observation. This took place on a Thursday, and my only concern now was to make good my landing. On the following Sunday it was promulgated throughout the ship, that a certain number of the crew were to be allowed leave to go on shore in the afternoon. I determined, therefore, to make an effort, and the dinner hour being over, I heard orders given to man the cutter for the liberty-men. The latter were in the mean time busily employed in rigging themselves for the occasion in their best togs. I, of course, intended to go in my working dress, consisting of a red flannel shirt, blue jacket, and tarry trowsers, as I thought the officers would less suspect me of a design to run away. Full of anxiety, but not without hope, I entered the gun-room, in which were Mr Oxley, then commanding officer of the ship, and Mr Sherard the purser. The former inquiring my business, I answered, that I wished, with his permission, to go on shore for two or three hours, having a friend in Portsmouth, who I was in hopes would supply me with some necessaries I

stood in need of. Mr Oxley smiled and hesitated, remarking the shabbiness of my appearance ; at length on my urging my suit, with a trembling voice (for no one who has not been similarly situated, can conceive what I then felt) he inquired if he might depend on my returning on board at sun-set in the ship's boat ? I assured him that he might, and he then consented to my going. Having thanked him from the bottom of my heart, I quitted the gun-room, but had no sooner closed the door than I was recalled by Mr Oxley. Somewhat alarmed lest he should be about to retract, I returned, and found I was called at the instance of Mr Sherard, who, drawing out his purse, presented me with half-a-guinea ! saying, he had promised me something for my late assistance. I thanked him and again withdrew. I had scarcely shut the door a second time, when I was again recalled, which still more surprised and alarmed me. On re-entering, Mr Oxley said, (but in what I thought a good-natured way) " Mind, Mr Vaux, if you're not on board by six o'clock, I shall send the marines after you." I again promised obedience, and once more retired. I then hastened to inform a friend of my good fortune, and gave him the key of my chest, desiring him, in case I did not return in the evening, to take out such articles as he chose, as well as my bedding, &c. before they were seized by order of the captain. On ascending the deck I was again alarmed. The acting master, who was on the quarter-deck, seeing me about to enter the boat, called me aft, and inquired where I was going ? I answered that Mr Oxley had given me leave to go ashore. He replied, " Mr Oxley, I am sure, would never give you leave to go ashore in that dirty dress ;" and absolutely forbade my going. It was in vain that I remonstrated, and referred him to Mr Oxley ; and during the delay occasioned by this conversation, the boat was on the point of departure : when, luckily, the master turning his back to give

some orders, I hastily descended to the waist, and leaping through one of the midship ports, found myself happily in the cutter, at the moment when the coxswain gave the word to shove off. I concealed myself in the foresheets until out of danger, and in about ten minutes was landed at Common Hard. I need not labour to paint the joy I felt at that moment, though it was certainly mixed with anxiety as to my further success. I immediately left the other liberty-men, who pressed me in vain to drink with them; and, pleading urgent business, ran with the utmost expedition along the streets, inquiring for the Point, where having arrived, I found several ferry-boats ready to cross over to Gosport. A fellow calling out "Over, sir?" I jumped into his boat, and in a few minutes found myself on Gosport-beach. Thus far, I sailed before the wind; I walked up the beach, and the first object that presented itself was the London stage-coach, standing at the door of the Red Lion Inn. This novel sight, which I had not beheld for so many years, was so gratifying that I admired and examined it for some minutes, as minutely as a countryman would do the king's state-coach. I soon found on inquiry the lodgings of Mrs B——y, which were at a public-house near the Red Lion. On asking for her of the landlady, I had the mortification to learn that she was out on board of some ship, and that her return was uncertain. It was now near four o'clock, and the days being short, my term of leave would soon expire. However, as there was no remedy but patience, I entered the tap-room, and calling for a pint of ale, and a pipe, sat down to wait the arrival of my worthy friend. I had scarcely taken a dozen whiffs when I heard a footstep in the passage of the house; and my landlady putting out her head, inquired "Is that you Mrs. B——y?" I had the pleasure to hear that good woman answer, "Yes." On the landlady informing her there was a young man waiting for her,

she opened the door ; and seeing me, said with a significant look, and evidently much pleased, "Oh, is that you, William, step up stairs with me, and I'll give you those things." I paid for my ale, and followed Mrs B——y, who was accompanied by her husband, and both of them loaded with goods they had brought from their boat. On entering their apartment, they expressed much pleasure at my good luck in getting ashore, and gave me the most cordial welcome. The old woman put on the tea-kettle, and while it was boiling, she looked out my clothes, which she set about airing by the fire. Having obliged me to take a dram, they began to consult on the measures to be adopted in my favour. Mr B——y informed me that the coach I had seen would set out at six o'clock ; that the inside fare to London was twenty-four shillings, and the outside seventeen shillings, inquiring which I would prefer, and how I stood for cash. I answered that I had about twenty-four shillings, (namely, the half guinea I had brought from New South Wales, another which I had received from the purser, and three or four shillings I had acquired since our arrival,) but that an outside place would answer my purpose, and I should then have a trifle for expenses. This worthy couple assured me I should not be lost for a few shillings, if I found myself at all deficient ; but I declined this favour, knowing I could make shift with what I had. Mr B——y then offered to go himself to the coach-office, and secure me a place. I accordingly gave him the required sum, and he hastened to the Red Lion. During his absence, Mrs B——y gave me some warm water to wash myself, which having done, she desired me to put on all my clothes but my coat ; she then put an apron over my shoulders, and proceeded to dress my hair as well as she could, and, for want of powder, made use of some flour, with which she plentifully whitened my head. Having put on my coat, she next threw some

flour over my back, and taking a view of me, declared she never saw so great an alteration in a man. She complimented me upon my genteel appearance, and added, that she was sure if I was met by any of my own officers, they would not know me in this garb. Her husband now returning, informed me that he had taken a place for me in the name of Lowe, as I directed, and had told the coachman to take me up at the Dolphin inn, near the extremity of the town. Everything being now arranged, I anxiously wished for the hour of six; and though I had not the least grounds for fear, yet I could not wholly divest myself of it. It is true, as I landed at Portsmouth, it was not likely, in case there was any suspicion, that a search would be set afoot in Gosport, which is on the opposite side of the harbour; besides, no inquiry was likely to be made for me, till after six o'clock, at which hour the coach would set off. Having taken a dish of tea, and the time approaching, I took an affectionate leave of the good woman, promising to write to her on my arrival in town, and at a future day to reward her kindness. The old man insisted on accompanying me to the Dolphin, and seeing me safe off. The weather being intensely cold, they would have pressed me to accept a great-coat, but I refused to trespass further on their goodness. At length we departed, and walked without interruption to the Dolphin; but I trembled at the approach of every officer or genteel person we met, so great was my fear of miscarriage on this important occasion. Having some minutes to wait for the coach, Mr B—— insisted on my drinking a parting glass at the bar of an adjacent public house, which having done, we heard the joyful sound of the horn, and the rattling of the coach-wheels. In a few minutes I ascended the vehicle, and as it drove off, I saw my worthy old friend waving his hand at the corner of the street, apparently as much affected as myself on the occasion. Having

thus described my escape from a state of thralldrom, in which I might otherwise have suffered much vexation and hardship, I shall here conclude the twenty-first chapter of my Memoirs.

CHAPTER XXII.

I ARRIVE IN LONDON. A SUDDEN ALARM. VISIT MY MOTHER AND SISTERS. SET OUT FOR SHIRE. INTERVIEW WITH MY GRANDFATHER. RETURN TO TOWN. A LUCKY HIT ON THE ROAD. OBTAIN A SITUATION IN THE CROWN-OFFICE.

ABOUT four miles from Gosport, is a place called Fareham, where is a gate, through which on the coach passing I had always understood that the passengers were subject to an overhaul, as the sailors term it. I was, therefore, somewhat alarmed during this part of my journey. I felt confident, however, that I could give a good account of myself, had I been questioned; but to my great joy, on our approach, the gate was thrown open, and the coach passed without stopping. I now felt extremely cold, and my dress being thin, I suffered much during the night. In order to counteract the effects of the frost, I fortified myself with a good dram of brandy at every stage, and the ensuing morning proving delightfully fine, I at length found both my animal and mental spirits revive, and my heart beat high with expectation of the happiness I anticipated. About eight o'clock I was gratified with a sight of Hyde Park Corner; and I leave the reader to imagine what transports I felt at the difference between my then situation and that from which I had so recently and happily emerged. On my

ascending the coach at Gosport, I had placed myself on the roof between two men who had the appearance of country farmers, and I maintained that situation throughout the night, by which indeed I was something benefited, for they had both good great-coats, and we sitting rather crowded, I was warmer than I should otherwise have been. On the coach stopping at the Gloucester coffee-house, Piccadilly, I expressed my intention to alight and walk; the two farmers had the same inclination, and I observed that if they were going my way, I should be glad of their company. They answered they were strangers in town, and their only object was to find out the inn from which the Yorkshire coach set out, as they were about proceeding to that county immediately. I replied, I was myself almost a stranger to those matters, but I fancied the inn lay in the way I was going, and that I would with pleasure conduct them to it. We accordingly set forwards, and walked through Piccadilly, the Haymarket, Strand, &c. until we came to Fetter lane; and arriving at the White Horse, I was, I found, right in my conjecture, for the York coach was among the number of those advertised in large characters on each side the gateway of the inn. I introduced them to the coach-office, where they took places for the ensuing evening; and, as my night's ride had brought me to an appetite, I proposed (before going to my mother's, whose lodgings were close at hand) that we should breakfast together; to which they assenting, I conducted them to the coffee-room, and calling the waiter, ordered tea, coffee, and plenty of muffins with all possible speed. We had nearly concluded our meal, and I had just bespoke a morning paper from the waiter, when the room beginning to fill, several gentlemen entered, and passed the table at which we sat, proceeding to the upper end of the room. At that moment a voice struck my ear, which almost petrified me with fear and astonishment, for I felt

persuaded at the time that it was that of Mr Oxley himself, exclaiming, "Waiter, see that portmanteau of mine brought in." On hearing these words, I almost dropped the tea-cup from my hand, and on the impulse of the moment quitted my seat, and hastily left the room; nor did I stop for a moment's reflection until I had crossed Holborn, and found myself at the corner of Gray's inn lane. Then however conceiving I was out of danger, I endeavoured to rally my spirits, and to persuade myself that I must have been mistaken, as it was highly improbable that Mr Oxley, whom I had left on board the Buffalo, should so suddenly have arrived in town, and particularly at the White Horse, no Portsmouth or Gosport coach setting up there. However, Mr Oxley's voice and manner of speaking being a little remarkable, I was so far in doubt that I determined not to return. What opinion the countrymen must form of me, I know not; it is likely they would impute my unmannerly departure to a design of avoiding payment of the reckoning. I have since ascertained that I was mistaken in my conjecture, for Mr Oxley did not quit the ship until several days afterwards.

I now repaired to Middle row, and inquiring for my mother, was ushered up stairs, where I found her and my two sisters pretty comfortably situated in a genteel first floor, which they hired ready furnished. They all expressed great joy at seeing me. My mother appeared to be in a declining state, but my sisters were much improved, and really very fine girls. I understood that the whole family were supported by the industry of the latter, who worked incessantly at their needle, being excellent proficient in fancy-work, which they obtained from various shops. Having explained to my mother the particulars of my situation, and the risk I had incurred by my desertion; and recollecting that I had inconsiderately suffered her letter, in which was her address, to be seen by se-

veral persons on board the Buffalo, it occurred to me that captain Houston might possibly come to the knowledge of that particular, the consequence of which might be fatal to me. It was the opinion of my mother that I should, on that account, absent myself from town for a few weeks, until the affair was blown over, and my mother advised that I should go down to my relations in S——shire. I accordingly the next day set out by the coach, an aunt of mine who was in good circumstances supplying me with the needful. On arriving at S——— I went to a public-house, which was still kept by a woman who had known me from my infancy; as I feared to break abruptly on my aged grandfather, who might be too much affected to sustain the surprise, I therefore got the landlady to send word that a stranger had arrived, who brought news from his grandson: having thus prepared the way, I followed in person, and was received with transport by my dear and venerable benefactor. On inquiring into his circumstances, I was grieved to learn that he had been for several years obliged to subsist upon the charity of his friends, and particularly the worthy family of the Moultries, of whom I have made honourable mention in the second chapter of these Memoirs. I was also concerned to find that the dear old man's faculties were much impaired, and my grief was heightened by the reflection that my misconduct and consequent misfortunes had been the primary cause of his mental as well as pecuniary distress. My other relatives in S——— treated me with every mark of attention, and I was hospitably entertained by them all during my stay in that town. It is to be observed, that only two or three of my nearest relations were acquainted with the events of my life for the last seven years. It was given out that I had been abroad, but it was understood in a respectable capacity. About a fortnight after my arrival in S——shire, I received a letter

from my mother, informing me that no inquiry whatever had been made respecting me, and concluding from thence that I might with safety return when I thought proper. As no prospect of employment presented itself in the country, it was the opinion of my friends that I should again try my fortune in London; for which purpose they jointly supplied me with money to defray my present expenses, and contributed among them a few necessaries I was most in need of. I was persuaded that my dear grandfather would not experience the want of any reasonable comforts during the short remaining term of his life, which could not in all probability be long protracted. I was therefore less solicitous about continuing on the spot, as my presence in fact only tended to recall to his half-distracted mind the remembrance of former and better days. My grandfather gave me letters of recommendation to several of his old law acquaintances, particularly one to a Mr Belt, who held a superior situation in the Crown office, and who had formerly been articled to himself when resident in London.

All things being arranged, I once more took leave of my friends, and set off by the coach for London, on the 1st of January 1808. Having occasion to take a fresh coach at Birmingham, and wishing to take a little recreation, which the restraint I was under at S——, and the nature of the place had hitherto precluded me from, and having the pecuniary means of so doing in my power, I determined on devoting a few days to that object before I resumed my journey to London. After three days' amusement I again took coach, and having travelled all night, we stopped about seven in the morning at Henley-upon-Thames to breakfast. I had been so free in my expenses at Birmingham, that I had at this time but four shillings left in my purse. I therefore declined alighting, in order to save the cost of a breakfast, as I had had a snack at

the last stage, and felt no inclination to eat. The other passengers having entered the house, I remained alone in the coach, the horses being taken out, and the coachman and guard having also quitted it. After sitting a few minutes, it occurred to me that I had seen a number of small parcels put into the seats of the coach, previous to our departure from Birmingham; and, having frequently heard of large sums in bank notes being transmitted by this mode of conveyance to London, I was tempted to purloin one of them, which it appeared I should run no risk in doing, as the coast was clear, and I had a large bundle of linen, &c. deposited in one of the seats. I solemnly declare that, until this moment, no idea of depredation had entered my head since my arrival in England; the act was therefore perfectly unpremeditated. Without hesitation then, I opened the seat, and taking out my bundle, untied it, in case of a surprise. As I had not time to examine the contents of the various parcels, I determined to trust to fortune, and therefore took out the first which came to hand. It was enclosed in brown paper, tied with packthread, about twelve inches by eight in size, and from its weight and hardness I supposed it to contain some kind of cutlery or other hardware; but as such goods were commonly packed up with bank notes, to prevent a suspicion of money being enclosed, the apparent contents were a matter of indifference to me. The parcel was directed to "Mr ———, Goodge street, Tottenham court road." This circumstance convinced me there could be no discovery of the robbery until after I was far enough from the coach, which I intended to quit on arriving at the Gloucester coffee-house, as, in case I had gone on to the George and Blue Boar in Holborn, the parcel might possibly have been searched for on our passing the end of Tottenham court road. Having concealed my prize in my own bundle, which I replaced in the seat, I judged it

best to alight and partake of breakfast with the other passengers. I was also in better spirits on account of the confidence I felt, that I should find something in the parcel to recruit my slender finances; as, let the contents be what they might, it was probable they would produce me at least a guinea or two, which would supply my immediate exigencies. I accordingly entered the parlour, and took a cup of coffee with the company. The bill being called, amounted to two shillings and three pence per head; I put down half-a-crown, which left me in possession of eighteen pence. We then re-ascended the coach, and resumed our journey. At three in the afternoon we entered London, and stopping as usual at the Gloucester coffee-house, I told the coachman I should then leave him, as I resided in the neighbourhood. He inquired if I had any luggage, and on my saying I had a bundle in the seat, he opened the door and handed it to me. I gratified him with a shilling out of my small stock, and made the best of my way. Having suffered the coach to pass on, I followed slowly until I arrived in Holborn; but previous to visiting my mother, I entered a public-house, being anxious to examine my newly-acquired prize. Retiring to a private room, I cut the string with a trembling hand, and opening the outside paper, found three several parcels (also in brown paper) lying one upon another. Developing the first of these, I found it to contain, to my no small surprise and chagrin, a quantity of fine new — twelvepenny nails! about a hundred in number. My hopes now fell to the ground. I was determined, however, to see the whole; and lo! the second paper contained — the same quantity of tenpenny nails!! The third and last, which I carelessly unfolded, expecting nothing better, presented a number of small plated articles, apparently designed for fixing on harness, being hooks, rings, &c. of various shapes, and every one separately wrapped in fine silver paper. As

these latter articles were of no more real value to me than the nails, I was much mortified at my ill luck, and was on the point of tying up the whole parcel in order to throw it away as soon as I gained the street, when it fortunately struck me that there must be, somewhere, a letter or note accompanying these goods. I, therefore, once more overhauled the packages, and lifting up the bottom one, found under it a letter, which, on taking up, I perceived to contain an enclosure, and I plainly felt several pieces of loose money. Now again my spirits rose—all that I had read and heard of large sums in bank-notes being artfully transmitted in this manner, recurred to my mind, and I eagerly drew the candle towards me, half afraid, and yet impatient to see the event. The letter was superscribed in the same manner as the parcel; and opening it, I scarce could believe my eyes, when I discovered some bank-paper carefully folded, and through which the black marks of the sum were plainly discernible! Before I ascertained the amount, however, I proceeded to peruse the letter, and found it to the following effect:—"Sir, I have sent you herewith specimens of the nails and other articles; the order shall be completed as speedily as possible. I have also enclosed you 47*l.* 9*s.* which you will find to be the present balance between us. I am, &c."—Here was an unexpected windfall! The reader will conceive my joy, and with what satisfaction I replaced the parcel in my bundle, in order to quit the public-house. The notes proved to be two of twenty pounds each on a Birmingham bank, but payable also at Forster, Lubbock, and Co.'s in London, a bank of England five-pound note, and another of two pounds, also a bank dollar, and four shillings. I now repaired with a light heart to my mother's lodgings, where I met with a cordial welcome. Having spent the evening with my mother, I walked into the city and procured a bed at an inn. The next morning I sent one of my twenty

pound notes by a porter to the banking-house, where he procured small notes of the Bank of England in exchange ; I soon afterwards called myself with the second, and did the like. Being now possessed of near fifty pounds by this lucky hit, I determined to furnish myself with a stock of genteel clothes, a watch, and other appendages, prior to my obtaining some employment, as I always considered an outward appearance essential to success in every pursuit ; but I was firmly resolved never again to hazard my liberty by a second act or attempt of a similar nature.

In a few days I had purchased such articles as were most requisite, at the expense of about forty pounds, and I then turned my attention to procuring a genteel situation. I accordingly waited on Mr Belt, the gentleman I mentioned of the Crown Office, who, on perusal of the letter I presented, testified his respect for my grandfather's recommendation, and very obligingly offered to take me as an assistant clerk under his own direction in the above office, if I thought fit to accept of a guinea a week, which was all he could promise to allow me at first, but might be afterwards increased. I thought this too favourable an offer to be rejected. I therefore thankfully closed with it, and prepared immediately to attend assiduously to the duties of my office.

CHAPTER XXIII.

QUIT THE CROWN OFFICE, AND ENGAGE AS READER IN A PRINTING OFFICE. DETERMINE TO LIVE A STRICTLY HONEST LIFE. MEET WITH AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE WHO LAUGHS ME OUT OF MY RESOLUTION. GIVE UP ALL THOUGHTS OF SERVITUDE AND BECOME A PROFESSED THIEF.

I HAD, on my second arrival in London, engaged a small apartment in a creditable house, and regulated my expenses upon principles of the strictest economy; but notwithstanding every possible effort, I soon found it impossible to subsist within my income; consequently, in a few weeks, I had sensibly decreased my little capital. I therefore began to consider how I might obtain a more productive situation, as I saw no prospect of my present salary being augmented. At this juncture I met with an advertisement for a person of good education, to act as reader in a printing-office. Though this was an employment of which I had not the least idea, I determined to offer myself, conceiving there could be nothing very difficult in its duties. Having therefore first inquired into the nature of the latter, I boldly applied to the advertiser, Mr Barnard, on Snowhill: and, in answer to his queries, replied that I had lately left the service of a country printer, whom I named, and was well acquainted with the business of a printing-office in general; adding, that if he pleased to make trial of me, I doubted not of proving well qualified for the situation in question. Mr Barnard consented to do so; and informing me that the salary he had given my

predecessor was two guineas a week, expressed his willingness to allow me the same. I was so much pleased with this increase of wages, as well as with the nature of the employment when explained to me, that I immediately quitted Mr Belt, and began my attendance at the office of Mr Barnard. My business here was to read over or examine the proofs (sheet by sheet, as they were struck off by the pressmen) of every new work printed by my employer. These proofs or first impressions, having been first compared with the copy or manuscript, the errors so discovered being noted by me, were corrected by the compositor, and a second impression produced, which was then carefully examined, and the few errors yet remaining were rectified as before. A third sheet was then revised by me, which in most cases proved perfectly correct; and this being ascertained, the required number of copies were struck off, whilst a succeeding sheet was in the hands of the compositors, in a state of progress for the like operation. In a few days I had a perfect knowledge of the business confided to me; and here I found the advantages of a good education, and of my extensive reading, which enabled me at first sight to detect many errors that an experienced "reader," with a common education, would have passed over, particularly where Latin or French phrases, quotations, &c. were introduced. This soon became obvious to my employer, who expressed his satisfaction, and paid me more than common respect. On my part I was equally pleased with my new situation. The business of Mr Barnard's office was very extensive. It employed from forty to fifty workmen in various capacities, and he had generally ten or more different works (periodical as well as others) in the press. Among these were some of an entertaining kind; so that while I was performing my duty, I gratified my passion for reading, and anticipated the public in the perusal of many curious and interesting new publications.

I still adhered closely to my system of economy, and took care to expend something less than my income. It was my fixed determination to abstain from every kind of dishonesty; and for about three weeks I met with no temptation to an opposite conduct. but one day, as I entered the eating-house at which I commonly dined, I was accosted by a young man who had come home with me from New South Wales, in the *Buffalo*, having been for several years in the service of governor King. This was, in fact, the very person to whom I had confided my intention of deserting, and bequeathed my effects previous to my going ashore. Our joy at meeting was reciprocal, and before we parted an appointment to sup together the same evening was the consequence. My old friend informed me that the *Buffalo* was paid in about five days after I quitted her, and that the crew were immediately drafted into various ships; he himself was put on board the *Diomedé* of 50, and having at last, with much difficulty, obtained a liberty-ticket for eight days, he had been about a week in town. It is needless to add, that nothing was further from his thoughts than returning. From him I also learnt that a diligent search was instituted for me in Portsmouth the day after my absconding, and that captain King, as well as his subordinate captain Houston, were much exasperated on the occasion. On meeting my ship-mate at the appointed place (which by-the-by, proved to be a house of ill repute) he introduced me to several other old acquaintances, who had also come home with us, and to a few of the same stamp, who had been a longer time returned, from New South Wales. I soon discovered that they had all resumed the same depredatory course of life which had caused their former sufferings, and must inevitably entail upon them future misery and disgrace. However, as I knew how fruitless it would be to advise or remonstrate, I contented myself with letting them know

that I had met with a tolerable situation which enabled me to live *upon the square*,* and that I had *tied up priggings*,† as I was determined never to be *lagged*‡ again. By this communication I only incurred, at the moment, a few dry jokes on my pretended honesty, and a hint or two that I should soon become tired of servitude, and be easily brought over to get an easy guinea. Upon the whole, I spent a very agreeable evening; but to prevent a relapse, I determined to avoid the company of these misguided persons in future, notwithstanding they extracted a promise at parting that I would meet them again next day. This promise I scrupled not to break, and how long I might have refrained from their society I know not; but a day or two afterwards, as I was descending Holborn-hill in my way to the office, I unexpectedly met my old partner and fellow-sufferer, Alexander Bromley, whom I had left in Newgate in 1801. Having in vain made inquiry as to his fate, since my return to England, I was truly glad to see him, for he looked well and was genteelly dressed. I was so much altered, that when I first accosted him, he had no immediate recollection of me, but on making myself known, nothing could exceed the joy he evinced at our meeting. Before we parted it was indispensable that we should drink together, and he hastily informed me that he had served his seven years on board the hulks, at Portsmouth, from whence he returned to London the 17th of September 1807, and that he was now once more under the protection of his father, who had received him with great kindness, and was inclined, if he continued honest, to take care of his future fortune; but added, with a shrewd shake of the head, that he could never reconcile himself to confinement on a shop-board, and feared he should

* Honestly.

† Left off thieving.

‡ Transported.

very speedily make a push at some higher enjoyments. Having agreed to dine together, and by mere accident named the house at which I had lately supped as the place of meeting, we parted with some little regret.

Broinley was punctual to his time, and during the two hours I was allowed for dinner, we became more fully informed of each other's circumstances. When I was on the point of leaving him to return to my duty, two or three of my Botany Bay acquaintances dropping in, forcibly detained me; urging that I might for once stretch a point, and spend the afternoon with them, ridiculing with too much effect the idea of a man like myself being confined to certain hours like a school-boy, &c. As I was somewhat elevated with the liquor I had drank, and had really no business at the office which could not be easily deferred, I consented in an evil moment to join the party which was forming, consisting of nearly a dozen persons, most of them recently returned either from the hulks or New South Wales. It is needless to describe the nature of our conversation, or the various characters of which the party was composed; let it suffice to state (with sorrow and shame I confess it) that I was effectually laughed out of my late good intentions; and before we parted, had joined with the loudest of them in decrying and condemning every species of servitude or confinement; and cordially agreed in a resolution to live independent while I could, and to make up by every means in my power for the privations and sufferings I had endured for the last seven years.

From this moment I returned no more to the printing office, but joined myself with Broinley and a few others, who regularly walked out every evening in quest of money, without confining our pursuits to any particular branch, but embracing every opportunity which offered. These were indeed but few, and far from productive, so that I soon grew heartily tired of the set I was associated with, and determined to with-

draw myself from them the first opportunity, and to live by the exercise of my own ingenuity. Indeed my appearance was so much above, and of so different a stamp from theirs, that this circumstance alone was enough to excite suspicion, and on many accounts rendered them unsuitable companions for me. I determined however not to discard poor Bromley, for whom I felt a real friendship, on account of our former intimacy and joint misfortunes.

CHAPTER XXIV.

VARIOUS MODES OF OBTAINING MONEY. MY REGULAR COURSE OF LIFE WHEN DISENGAGED FROM MY VICIOUS COMPANIONS. MEET WITH AN AMIABLE GIRL, LIKE MYSELF THE CHILD OF MISFORTUNE. WE COHABIT TOGETHER. OUR MUTUAL HAPPINESS.

HAVING withdrawn myself from my late companions, I now became very circumspect in my proceedings; and as Bromley had neither the appearance nor the manners of a gentleman, I only made use of him occasionally in the course of my practice, keeping him in the background to receive and carry any articles which I purloined, and never suffering him to converse with or approach me except in private. I generally spent the mornings, that is, from about one o'clock to five P. M. (which are the fashionable hours for shopping) in visiting the shops of jewellers, watchmakers, pawn-brokers, &c. Having conceived hopes that this species of robbery would turn to a good account, and depending upon my own address and appearance, I determined to make a circuit of the town, and not to omit a single

shop in either of those branches; and this scheme I actually executed so fully, that I believe I did not leave ten untried in all London, for I made a point of commencing every day in a certain street and went regularly through it on both sides the way. My practice was to enter a shop and request to look at gold seals, chains, brooches, rings, or any other small articles of value; and while examining them, and looking the shopkeeper in the face, I contrived by sleight of hand to conceal two or three (sometimes more) in the sleeve of my coat, which was purposely made wide. On some occasions I purchased a trifling article to save appearances; at other times I took a card of the shop, promising to call again; and, as I generally saw the remaining goods returned to the window, or place from whence they were taken, before I left the shop, there was hardly a probability of my being suspected, or of the property being missed. In the course of my career I was never once detected in the fact, though on two or three occasions so much suspicion arose, that I was obliged to exert all my effrontery, and to use very high language, in order, as the cant phrase is, to *bounce the tradesman out of it*; and my fashionable appearance, and affected anger at his insinuations, had always the effect of convincing him that he was mistaken, and inducing him to apologize for the affront put upon me. I have even sometimes carried away the spoil notwithstanding what had passed, and I have often gone a second and third time to the same shop, with as good success as at the first. To prevent accidents, however, I made it a rule never to enter a second shop with any stolen property about me; for as soon as I had quitted the first, I privately conveyed my booty to Bromley, who was attending my motions in the street, and herein I found him eminently useful. By this course of depredation I acquired on the average about ten pounds a week, though I sometimes neglected shopping for several days.

together. This was not indeed the only pursuit I followed, but was my principal morning's occupation; though, if a favourable opportunity offered of getting a guinea by any other means, I never let it slip. In the evenings I generally attended one of the theatres, where I mixed with the best company in the boxes, and at the same time that I enjoyed the amusements of the place, I frequently conveyed pocket-books, snuff-boxes, and other portable articles, from the pockets of their proprietors into my own. Here I found the inconvenience of wanting a suitable companion who might have received the articles I made prize of, in the same manner as Bromley did in the streets; but though I knew many of the light-fingered gentry, whose appearance fitted them for any company, yet, their faces being well known to the police officers who attend the theatres, they would not have been suffered to enter the house: and herein I possessed an advantage which many of these gentry envied me; for being just arrived in England, and a new face upon the town, I carried on my depredations under the very noses of the officers, without suspicion. Having therefore at first no associate, I was obliged to quit the theatre and conceal my first booty in some private spot, before I could make (with prudence) a second attempt. Upon the whole I was very successful in this pursuit also, at least as to the number of articles I filched; and had their value been reasonably proportionate to what I expected, I need not long have followed so hazardous an employment. I have very frequently obtained nine or ten pocket-books, besides other articles, in an evening; and these being taken from gentlemen evidently of fortune and fashion, I had reason to expect I should some time meet with a handsome sum in bank notes; but fortune did not favour me therein, for during near twelve months' almost nightly attendance at one or other of the public places, I never found more than twenty pounds in a book, and

that only on one occasion. I several times got five, ten, or eleven pounds, but commonly one, two, or three pounds, and most generally four books out of five contained nothing but letters, memorandums, and other papers useless to me. At the same time I knew frequent instances of the common street pick-pockets getting a booty of fifty, one hundred, and sometimes three or four hundred pounds. However, I never failed to pay the expenses of the night; and if I gained nothing, I enjoyed at least a fund of amusement, which was to me the highest gratification. It sometimes happened that the articles I got (particularly pocket-books) were advertised by the losers within a few days as "lost," and a reward offered for their restoration: when this reward was worth notice, I frequently restored the property by means of a third person whom I could confide in, and whom I previously tutored for the purpose.

In the mean time the manner in which I spent my life, abstracted from the disgraceful means by which I supported myself, was (as I have formerly hinted) perfectly regular and inoffensive. Though I lived by depredation, yet I did not, like the abandoned class of common thieves, waste my money and leisure time in profligate debauchery, but applied myself to the perusal of instructive and amusing books, my stock of which I daily increased. I occupied genteel apartments in a creditable house, the landlord of which understood me to hold a situation under government, and every part of my conduct at home tended to confirm his opinion of my respectability. I was scrupulously exact in paying my rent, as well as the different tradesmen in the neighbourhood with whom I had occasion to deal; nor did I ever suffer any person of loose character to visit me, but studiously concealed from those of my acquaintance my place of residence. I was sometimes indeed so imprudent as to resort, for company's sake, to some of those public houses frequented by thieves and other

dissolute characters, the landlord of which is himself commonly an experienced thief, or returned transport. When I had a mind to relax a little, or grew tired of domestication, I disguised my appearance as much as I could, and repaired to a house of this description, sometimes taking my *Dulcinea* with me, whom I shall shortly introduce to the reader, and whose person and dress I was not a little proud of exhibiting in public. This fondness for flash houses, as they are termed, is the rock on which most persons who live by depredation unhappily split, and will be found in the sequel to have brought me to my present deplorable condition; for the police officers, or traps, are in the daily habit of visiting these houses, where they drink with the thieves, &c., in the most familiar manner; and I believe often obtain secret information by various means from some parties, respecting the names, characters, pursuits, &c., of others. By this imprudent conduct I also became personally known to many of the officers, which was productive of great danger to me in the exercise of my vocation; whereas, had I avoided such houses, I might have remained unknown and unsuspected by them for a series of years. I ought not to omit what may perhaps gratify the reader, as much as the act did myself, namely, that as soon as I became possessed of a moderate sum, I remembered the kindness shewn me by the good woman at Gosport, and wrote her a letter of thanks, enclosing a five-pound bank note, which no doubt proved highly acceptable. I also from time to time assisted my aged mother, whose circumstances were extremely narrow, and her support derived solely from the earnings of my two sisters, whose success depending on the caprice of fashion and of milliners, both alike inconstant, was but precarious. They, as well as my other relations in S—shire, were indeed totally ignorant of my unhappy relapse into a life of infamy, but believed my assertion that I had a liberal salary from

Mr Belt, and was still employed under that gentleman in the Crown office.

About three months after my return to London, and whilst in the zenith of my success, I was introduced by one of my former dissolute companions to the acquaintance of a young woman, who like myself had been well and tenderly brought up; but having been seduced by a young man equally inexperienced with herself, to quit her friends and cohabit with him as his wife, she had thereby forfeited the countenance of her family, and her paramour having died after a year's cohabitation, she had been driven to the usual refuge in such cases, a life of prostitution. At the period of my introduction, however, she had been only a few months upon the town, and I clearly perceived that her mind was yet but very slightly contaminated. As there were many reasons which rendered a female companion in whom I could place confidence desirable, and in fact necessary to me; and as this young woman's misfortunes had placed her in such circumstances that I had no obstacles to surmount on the score of delicacy, I proposed to her, after a few day's acquaintance, that we should live together; to which, as she was heartily tired of her present course of life, she willingly consented. She knew enough of the world, from her late experience, to surmise in what manner I obtained my living, of which, however, to avoid all duplicity, I fully possessed her. Having informed my landlord that my wife, whom I had not before mentioned to him, was arrived in town from a visit she had been paying in the country, I accordingly took her home; and in a very few days we had arranged a pretty snug system of domestic economy, and provided every requisite for the family life I meant in future to live. My companion was the daughter of an industrious mechanic, who having a numerous offspring, had only been enabled to give her a common education; but her mother had instructed her in the duties of housekeep-

ing, and she was perfectly conversant in all the qualities requisite to form a good wife. She was about nineteen years of age, agreeable in her person, and of the sweetest disposition imaginable; and what was most gratifying, the company she had latterly mixed with, and the disgusting examples before her eyes, had not been able to eradicate an innate modesty which she naturally possessed; so that her manners and conversation were such as fitted her for any company to which I might be inclined to introduce her. I informed my mother and sisters that I was on the point of contracting a union with this young woman, and having made them personally acquainted, the three young ladies soon became very intimate. As my mother and sisters but rarely called at my lodgings, and then merely *en passant*, I had no difficulty in concealing the connexion from them until I could with propriety declare my marriage to have taken place. We had the happiness of finding ourselves mutually pleased with each other, and I considered my meeting with so amiable a friend as one of the greatest blessings of my life. In a few weeks after our junction, my partner discovered evident symptoms of pregnancy, which, with her affectionate behaviour and real attachment to my interest, endeared her still more to me. In a word, I now felt myself as happy as any man daily risking his liberty and life, and exposed to the reproaches of his own conscience, could possibly be.

CHAPTER XXV.

ADVENTURES IN THE COURSE OF MY PROFLIGATE CAREER. MOTIVES WHICH INDUCE ME TO MARRY MY COMPANION. HER EXEMPLARY BEHAVIOUR. A FAMILY MISFORTUNE.

HAVING now settled myself in a manner much to my satisfaction, and happily met with a faithful friend, to whom I might confide my most secret thoughts, who would sincerely participate my joy when success crowned my pursuits; and who, in the hour of adversity, would condole with and cherish me, I applied myself with redoubled assiduity to the acquirement of money, with a full resolution, in the event of my meeting with one good booty, or realizing by degrees a sufficient sum, to quit the hazardous course of life I had embarked in, and to establish myself in some honest line of business. To this prudent measure I was also strongly prompted by my companion, who could not hide her fears and anxiety on my account, and was never easy during my absence from home on a predatory excursion. I continued to visit the shops as usual in the morning, and the theatres in the evening, with tolerable success; and my partner having expressed a desire to accompany me, in the hope of rendering me service, I was induced to gratify her. As her figure and address were both extremely prepossessing, and her air perfectly genteel, I soon found her eminently useful; for she not only received from me the property I purloined, but with much ingenuity would contrive to engross the attention of the shopkeeper while I robbed his counter, or by at-

ful gallanting with a gentleman at a public place, facilitate my design upon his pockets. At all times, when disengaged from these hazardous practices, we lived a life of perfect domestic happiness, our chiefest pleasure being centered in each other's company.

As our mutual affection increased, my companion, whom I had informed of the outlines of my past life, and who was aware of the dangers to which I was daily exposed, being filled with tender fears of losing me for ever, and prompted by sincere affection, suggested the idea of uniting ourselves indissolubly by marriage; in the hope that should I unhappily experience a reverse of fortune, and be again banished from my native country, she might obtain permission to share my misery, and contribute, by her society, to lessen my sufferings. This proposal so fully convinced me of her undisguised attachment, and had so much reason on its side, that I gave into it with ardent pleasure; and the necessary preliminaries being adjusted, we were accordingly married at St Paul's, Covent-garden, on the 21st of July 1808, her mother, to whom she had become reconciled, and who (judging by appearances) had a favourable opinion of the match, assisting at the ceremony.

Soon afterwards I communicated the event to my mother, informing her that weighty reasons had rendered it necessary to observe privacy on the occasion; and hinting to the unsuspecting old woman, that I had acquired by this marriage a considerable pecuniary advantage. This intimation gave my mother great pleasure, and I took care, by increased liberality towards her and my sisters, to confirm them in the opinion of my veracity. The behaviour of my wife became every day more exemplary; and had I been free from that remorse which must ever accompany a guilty life, and enabled to procure those necessary comforts which I knew so well how to enjoy, by upright means, I should have considered myself

supremely happy. In the beginning of the month of October, my wife, who was far advanced in her pregnancy, accompanied me one evening to Drury lane theatre; and the performance being over, we were descending the staircase from the box-lobby, when I attempted to possess myself of a gentleman's pocket-book; but by some accident he suspected my design, and publicly accused me therewith. Unfortunately several other gentlemen, who had been robbed in the course of the evening, being on the spot, and beginning to compare notes, agreed unanimously that they recollected my person as being near them about the time they were robbed, and did not scruple to insinuate that I ought to be detained and searched. This conversation naturally attracted the attention of the company immediately around us; but, while it took place, all the parties were obliged by the pressure of the throng behind to continue descending, and we in fact quitted the theatre all together. Being arrived in Little Russell street, the gentlemen surrounded me to the number of about a score, and our altercation became loud and vehement. Fortunately for me, no police-officers happened to be near the spot; for although I had nothing to fear from a search, yet the circumstance would have made me personally known to the latter, and would of course operate to my disadvantage on my future appearance at the theatre. I exerted every art of expostulation, and finally had recourse, on my part, to threats, affecting to feel highly insulted by their insolent insinuations; declared myself a gentleman of character, which I would prove to their cost; offered to give my card of address, or to retire to a coffee-house, and send for respectable persons who knew me, but all my rhetoric proved ineffectual; some were for giving me in charge to an officer; others still more violent were for having me pumped. At this moment a person named George W—k—n, now in this colony

who had been himself exercising his vocation in the pit of the theatre, happened fortunately to come up, and seeing a crowd collected, stopped to ascertain the cause. He immediately perceived the critical situation in which I stood, and having the appearance of a man of fashion, he stepped forward, and hearing the various motions of my persecutors, strongly advised them to forbearance and caution how they treated a gentleman, as I evidently appeared to be; urging that they must certainly be mistaken in their conjectures, that my proposal of giving my address, or a reference, ought to be sufficient, and particularly dwelt on the impropriety of taking the law into their own hands. These arguments of my friend W—k—n carried so much weight, that the gentlemen began to waver and grow less clamorous; till at length they dropped off one by one; and W—k—n, assuming a haughty tone, said, taking me by the arm, "Come, sir, you have been sufficiently exposed, and long enough detained on a charge which I am confident there is no foundation for; allow me to conduct you from this spot; if you are going towards St James's I shall be glad of your company, and let me see (raising his voice and cane together) who will dare to insult you farther." So saying, he led me away in triumph, tipping the wink to my poor wife, who had stood all the while at a small distance, much terrified and agitated by various emotions, which so much affected her, that though we lived within two hundred yards of the theatre, she had scarcely power to walk home; and we had no sooner quitted our kind conductor, who attended us to the door, than she fainted away, and was for some time insensible. The consequences of this untoward event were still more seriously afflicting, for her tender constitution was not proof against the shock, and she was the next day prematurely delivered of a male child, which, however, only lived eight hours, and was a subject of infinite regret to us both.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ADVENTURE OF THE SILVER SNUFF-BOX. ITS CONSEQUENCES. MY NARROW ESCAPE FROM TRANSPORTATION, WHICH I HAVE SINCE HAD REASON TO REGRET.

HAPPENING soon after the adventure at Drury lane, to read an advertisement, stating that a meeting of the freeholders of the county of Middlesex would be convened on the 11th of November, at the Mermaid tavern, Hackney, to consider of the expediency of petitioning the throne on the subject of parliamentary reform, it struck me that I might find it worth while to attend this meeting, as it would probably attract a large concourse of people, and, as at such assemblies riots and much confusion frequently occurred, which afforded a favourable opportunity for plundering the pockets of the company. On the day appointed, I accordingly left town in one of the Hackney stages, and, arriving at the Mermaid about one o'clock, found the sheriffs had just opened the business of the meeting, which was held in a large room commonly used as an assembly-room for dancing, and detached from the tavern itself. To my disappointment, however, there were not above three hundred persons collected, and the building being very spacious, there was not the least prospect of any violent pressure taking place. Before I commenced my operations, I entered a small house called "The Tap," immediately contiguous to, but distinct from, the Mermaid; and going into a parlour, called to the landlady, a decent looking elderly woman, for a glass of brandy

and water, and a pipe. Having taken and paid for this refreshment, I proceeded to the meeting, and found, so far from any tumult or uproar, that the whole company were collected at one end of the room, and listening in profound silence to the speech of some popular and patriotic orator, who was warmly censuring the conduct of ministers, and advocating the cause of liberty. I now entered the thickest part of the crowd, and having tried the pockets of a great many persons without feeling a single pocket-book, I at length extracted successively two snuff-boxes from different gentlemen; but their coats being buttoned up, and the pockets inside, I was obliged to use my scissors in cutting the bottom of each pocket, before I could obtain the desired prizes. This trouble and risk I should not have incurred had not I assured myself that the boxes from their shape, &c., were both silver; but, to my mortification they proved, on inspection, the one wood, and the other a sort of japanned leather, though both perfectly genteel, and mounted with silver: however, as they were of no intrinsic value to me, I threw them away; and, although it was rather imprudent, I entered the room a third time, in hopes of better success. I soon found myself standing behind a well-dressed man, who was wrapped in deep attention to the speaker, and perceived to my great joy that he had a small leather pocket-book in his inside coat-pocket, and also a very fine large snuff-box, evidently silver from its shape and weight. I had again recourse to my scissors, and having made an incision, extracted the contents of the pocket, with which I hastily retired: but I was again partially disappointed, for I found that what I had taken for a pocket-book, was in fact merely a pen-and-ink case: the box, however, was a very elegant one and quite new. Although it appeared that I was not destined to be very fortunate in this day's adventure, I determined to make one

other trial; but as it would be dangerous to keep the stolen box about me, and I saw no convenient spot in which to conceal it, I adopted the following method to dispose of it, while I made my final attempt in the assembly-room. Going into the little tap-house before described, I addressed the landlady, inquiring if she sold any snuff, or could without inconvenience procure me a little. She answered that she had none, but would get me some in a very short time. I thanked her, and replied that, as I was anxious to hear the debates in the assembly-room, she would oblige me by procuring an ounce of rappee, for which purpose I handed her the box I had just obtained, saying I would call for it in a quarter of an hour. Having now, as I conceived, effectually and safely deposited my prize, I left the Tap with an intention of re-entering the meeting-room; but suddenly changing my mind, I determined to desist, having by the box alone secured the expenses of my journey, and to return immediately home. However, as I felt hungry, and saw no signs of accommodation for eating in the Tap, I proceeded a little way up the street, till I came to a sort of cook's-shop, where I procured a lunch, and then returned to reclaim my snuff-box from my obliging old landlady, having been absent from her barely a quarter of an hour. Going boldly up to the little bar in which she sat, I inquired if she had procured me the snuff; she replied that she had, and turning round to a cupboard behind her, produced the box, which I held out my hand to receive; but, to my utter confusion, I was prevented by the gentleman himself, from whom I had stolen it, who, starting from a dark corner of the passage close to my elbow, where he had been concealed, received the box in his hand, and turning to me, inquired in a peremptory tone if that was my snuff-box? I answered with a smile, "No, sir, it is a box that I found—if you have any claim to

it, it is much at your service." He then inquired where I had found it. I replied that, going to make water in a corner of the stable-yard, I perceived something shline amongst some rubbish, which taking up, I found to be the box in question; that I was myself in the habit of taking snuff, and having that day left my own box at home, I thought it a good opportunity of getting a supply; that I had therefore commissioned the landlady to procure me some snuff, and left her this box for that purpose. The gentleman rejoined, that he had been robbed of the box in the assembly-room, and that having found it in my possession, he felt it incumbent to detain me on strong suspicions of being the thief. All I could urge, and every art I tried, were ineffectual to convince this rigid gentleman of my innocence; and several others joining him, one of them asked my name and situation in life. I answered, that when charged with so disgraceful an act as that of picking pockets, I should certainly decline giving such explanation; but that I should at a proper season be enabled to refute the accusation, and prove my respectability. To this the inquirer replied, that although himself a justice of the peace, he certainly had no wish to extort, nor was I obliged to give any answers against my inclination, and that upon the whole he could not censure me for preserving silence; however, as the property stolen had been traced to me, it became his duty, and that of the owner, to have me detained till I gave an account of myself. A constable being called in, was now desired to search me, which he proceeded to do, and the first thing he found was a pair of small scissors without a sheath, in my breeches-pocket, where I had in my hurry deposited them after cutting out my last booty. The constable exhibited these with an air of triumph, exclaiming to the by-standers, "See, gentlemen, here are the tools the pocket was cut with!" He also took from me about fifty shillings

in loose money, a pocket-book, card-case, pair of silver spectacles, a two-bladed knife, silver pencil-case, tobacco-box, handkerchief, gloves, &c. all my own property, and such as I usually carried about me. I had left my watch at home, which, it being a valuable one, I was frequently persuaded by my wife to do when I went upon such excursions as the present. The meeting being by this time dissolved, the loser of the box set off on his return to town, and I was left in charge of two constables, who were to follow with me. In about an hour, a coach being obtained, I was conveyed to Worship street office for examination, where I arrived at six in the evening, just as the magistrate had taken the chair. This worshipful justice was Joseph Moser, esq., a gentleman of an eccentric character, and the same, if I mistake not, whose name I have frequently met with in print, as the author of many well-written and humorous essays, &c. in periodical works. Being placed at the bar, the prosecutor, who proved to be a Mr Imeson, tobaccoist, in Holywell lane, Shoreditch, made his appearance in the same coat he had on in the morning, and exhibited his pocket, through the bottom of which he thrust his hand by way of demonstration. He stated, that he was that day attending the meeting of freeholders at Hackney, and while listening to the debates in the assembly-room, he had occasion to take snuff; when putting his hand in his pocket, he found the bottom of it cut, apparently with sharp scissors, and not only his snuff-box, but every other article taken out; that he was sure the depredation was recent, as he had taken snuff but a few minutes before, and had not since changed his position: that he staid to hear the conclusion of the business, and on leaving the room, was relating his loss to some gentlemen in the inn yard, and that a little boy happening to overhear him, stepped up and said, "Sir, my mother has got a pretty snuff-box, that a gentle-

man gave her to put some snuff in ;” on which he was induced to accompany the child to its parents, where, requesting to see the box, he found it to be his own ; that he had then taken the measures for my detection, which I have above related. The landlady, Mrs Andrews, was then sworn, and stated my coming to her house, taking some refreshment, and afterwards returning to inquire for snuff, leaving her the box, &c. all which, she said, was transacted in the most public manner ; and the good woman voluntarily added, that she could never suppose I should have acted as I had done, had I been the person who stole the box. The officer who had searched me, now produced the articles taken from my person, not forgetting to dwell upon the circumstance of the open scissors, the sheath of which he found in another pocket. The magistrate viewing these articles with attention observed, that he had no doubt of their being all stolen, and ordered them to be advertised in the daily papers, and that I should be brought up again on that day week, when it was probable the persons who had lost such articles would attend to identify them. As to the present charge, he said the case was clear enough, and he would, to save further trouble, bind over the parties to prosecute at once. Then addressing me, his worship inquired my name, place of abode, &c. I answered, that my name was James Hardy, but I must beg to decline giving any further account of myself, as it appeared that his worship was determined to commit me for trial, and I should therefore not trouble my friends until a future day. Mr Moser now remarked on some of the articles found upon me, inquiring with a sarcastic grin, how long I had worn barnacles ? As to the knife, he said it was evidently a thief’s knife ; and turning to Armstrong, one of his officers, he asked him if this was not such a blade as they used for *starring a glaze* ?* The knife and

* Cutting a pane of glass in a shop window.

scissors his worship called my working-tools. It was in vain I assured this facetious justice that these things were my own lawful property, and offered to prove where I had purchased them all: he insisted on detaining them, and was hardly persuaded to return the money taken from me. I was then committed to New Prison, Clerkenwell, to which I was conveyed about nine o'clock at night. Arriving there, I desired to be accommodated between-gates, and after paying the usual fees, &c. I was conducted to a bed in the same room I had occupied on a like occasion, in the year 1800. Having now leisure to reflect on the occurrences of the day, I began to consider my situation hopeless enough; the snuff-box having been traced to me, the circumstance of the pocket being cut, the scissors found, &c. altogether furnished a chain of evidence too strong, I feared, to be overruled by my bare assertion that I had found the property; a defence the most flimsy, but the most commonly resorted to. I therefore laid my account with being transported at least. What heightened my present distress was, that my poor wife would be grievously alarmed at my not returning home this night; and it would be a difficult matter even the next day to inform her of my situation, as I knew the officers were intent upon discovering, if possible, my place of abode, in order to ascertain my character, and mode of life. The morning being come, I was fortunate enough to meet with an intimate acquaintance, by whom I despatched a message to my wife, requiring her to visit me immediately, and in an hour's time I had the pleasure of seeing her appear. Her distress may be easily conceived. I comforted and encouraged her as well as I could; and giving her a strict caution not to suffer herself to be followed or watched in her return, desired she would wait with patience, and hope for the approach of the session, which would decide my fate. During the interval of my second

examination, I read the following advertisement, inserted by the officers of Worship street :—" Stopped upon a suspicious person, now in custody, the under-mentioned articles, supposed to be stolen ; [here they were all minutely described.] Any persons having lost such goods, are desired to attend at this office on Friday next, when the said person will be brought up for re-examination," &c. On the 18th of November I was accordingly re-conducted to Worship street, my wife being permitted to accompany me in the coach. Being again brought before Mr Moser, that gentleman inquired if anybody was in attendance to claim the property found on me ; and being answered in the negative, he expressed himself confident that claimants would appear, but said he would however finally commit me to Newgate, and that the articles in question should be detained until the day of my trial ; when, if not owned before, the court would no doubt restore them on my application ; nor could all my asseverations or arguments convince him of the property being my own, or induce him to alter his decree respecting them. I was accordingly conducted to Newgate, accompanied by my wife, whose uniform attention to me in this and every other distress, proved the sincerity of her attachment.

As the session was to commence on the 30th, I had no time to lose in preparing for my trial. I therefore drew up a brief for counsel, in which I dwelt strongly on the open and public manner in which I had acted with Mrs Andrews ; the improbability that I should have taken so much trouble, had I been the thief who stole the box, full of snuff, as the prosecutor described it to have been ; and on every other point which I thought might prove of moment, or afford the counsel an opportunity of shewing his wit or ingenuity, but still deceiving even him, by stoutly adhering to my first story of finding the property. This brief I sent by my wife, with the

usual fee, to Mr Knapp, a gentleman, of whose abilities I entertained a high opinion. Notwithstanding all this, I had at the bottom very little hopes of escaping conviction; and persons best experienced in such matters, who heard the circumstances, declared nothing but a miracle could save me. I however concealed these unpleasing ideas from my wife, and assured her that I felt confident of being acquitted. The grand jury being met, I soon heard that a true bill had been returned by them; and, on the following Wednesday, the court opening, I was taken down for trial, but was not put to the bar until Friday the 2nd of December. Previous to my leaving the ward of the prison in which I lodged, a fellow-prisoner, with whom I had become intimate, knowing the circumstance of my case, and the nature of my intended defence, had, in a half-jocular manner, offered to lend me his snuff-box, which he advised me to display to the court, and occasionally to take a pinch from it during my trial; this, he observed, would strengthen my assertion that I was in the habit of taking snuff, and give a colour to my defence; and he good-naturedly added that he hoped it would prove lucky to me. I thankfully accepted the proffered favour, of which I did not fail to make use at the proper season. Being arraigned at the bar, I stood capitally indicted for stealing a silver snuff-box, value two pounds, the property of Thomas Imeson, privily from his person. Mr Imeson having given his evidence, my counsel in cross-examining him said, "I take for granted, sir, you can't take upon yourself to swear, whether you were robbed of your snuff-box, or whether it fell through the whole in your pocket; all you know is, that you found your pocket torn, and the box, among other articles, missing?"

Answer. "Certainly, I cannot."

The landlady then stated, in a faltering voice, and evidently much embarrassed at being examined before

so large an assembly, the manner in which I had applied to her, &c. and in answer to a question from Mr Knapp, said, that she could never suppose I should have acted in the open manner I did, if I had stolen the box. The constable who searched me was the next witness; and he having described that proceeding, and produced the articles found upon me, the recorder, who presided on the bench, said, "I suppose, Mr Bell, there were a great variety of characters attending this meeting, which was held for the purpose of obtaining parliamentary reform?"

Ans. "Certainly, my lord."

Recorder. "No doubt there were many persons, freeholders as well as not freeholders?"

Ans. "Yes, my lord."

Recorder. "I dare say people of all descriptions, tag-rag and bob-tail!"

Ans. "There might, my lord."

I now began to entertain strong hopes, perceiving that the tide of prejudice ran in my favour. I was dressed in a very genteel but becoming manner, and had not the least appearance of a thief. I had put on the most modest air and countenance I could assume, and I thought the court and jury appeared to view me with favourable eyes. I therefore took another pinch from my friend's box, and waited the event with patience, being prepared with a good defence, when called upon to make it. But I was not put to that trouble; for the recorder addressing the jury, said, "Gentlemen, I must in this stage of the trial, deliver it as my opinion, that I cannot see any grounds for charging the prisoner with felony. Gentlemen, the accident of finding the snuff-box might have happened to any one of yourselves, to me, or to any other honest man; and it would be hard indeed if such an accident should subject the finder to a prosecution for felony. If you are of my opinion, it would be unnecessary to recapitulate the evidence, or put the pri-

soner upon his defence." His lordship then paused, and I leave the reader to imagine the state of suspense I was for some moments in. The jury having whispered together, one of them stood up and said, "My lord, we wish to ask a question of Mrs Andrews; namely, whether at the time the prisoner brought her the box, he delivered it as his own, or said he had found it?" Mr Knapp eagerly catching at this question, desired Mrs Andrews to stand up, and said to her, "Mrs Andrews, the jury wish to ask you whether the young man at the bar told you it was his own snuff-box, or whether he said he found it?" The poor simple woman, confused and trembling, and not comprehending the drift or importance of the question, answered in a low voice, "He said he had found it, gentlemen." Mr Knapp having obtained this answer, with a smile, or rather laugh of satisfaction, turned to the jury, repeating her words, "He said he had found it. I hope, gentlemen, you are now satisfied." He then folded up my brief, and handed it to an officer of the court, to whom he made a motion with his hand to return it to me. I received it with a respectful bow of acknowledgment, and Mr Knapp threw himself back in his seat, and began playing with his watch-chain, as much as to say, "The business is settled; I have successfully done my duty, and saved my client;" and so indeed he had, for the foreman immediately pronounced the welcome verdict of "Not guilty."

There is one circumstance to which my acquittal on this occasion may be in a great measure imputed; namely, that I was fortunately not known by any of the turnkeys or officers of the court, who never fail, when an old face appears, to give a private intimation to the judge, if (which is very rare) he should not himself recognise the party. I now applied to the court for the articles taken from me, which the recorder ordered to be restored; but first expressed a

wish to view them, saying to the constable, "Let me look at those articles, Mr Bell; there is nothing remarkable in them I suppose?" The malicious constable answered, "No, my lord, without it is the scissors." The recorder, having minutely examined them, replied, "I see nothing extraordinary in *them* neither, Mr Bell, except that they appear to be remarkable good ones—poo, poo, let the young man have his property, by all means:" on which the fellow, evidently chagrined, delivered the whole into my hands. As to the snuff-box, his lordship observed, there could be no doubt but it was the same which Mr Ineson had lost, though he could only speak to its identity as being of the same pattern, having bought it but a few days before the accident, and there being no mark which he could know it by: he was therefore ordered to retain it. I then bowed with gratitude to the court and the jury, and with respect to the auditors, and quitting the bar, had my irons knocked off, and was received with open arms by my dear wife, who had been waiting the issue in anxious suspense, accompanied by my friend Bromley. We all three returned to the prison, where I had left some little matters, and every one was astonished at my acquittal. I restored the borrowed snuff-box to my kind friend, not forgetting to acknowledge its beneficial effects by a present to himself, and a liberal treat to the whole ward. I afterwards sent for a coach, in which myself, my wife, and old companion, were driven to my lodgings in Duke's court, Drury lane; and I need not add, that we spent the remainder of the day in festivity, and heartfelt satisfaction. To account for my absence from home, my wife had informed the landlord, that I had met with an accident while at a friend's house, a few miles from town, and could not be removed until I was perfectly recovered. Notwithstanding I blessed heaven for this fortunate escape, which I had so little reason to ex-

pect, and thought myself supremely happy in recovering my liberty; yet I have ever since regretted that I was not then convicted, as there is little doubt but the capital part of the charge would have been done away with, and I should only have been transported for seven years, consequently, at the period of my writing these Memoirs, I should have had only a few months to serve before I became a free man; whereas the sequel will shew that I was in a short time afterwards cast for death, and now find myself in the hopeless and deplorable situation of a prisoner for life!

CHAPTER XXVII.

VISIT MR BILGER, AN EMINENT JEWELLER. HIS
POLITENESS, AND THE RETURN I MADE FOR IT.
PERFIDY OF A PAWNBROKER. OBLIGED TO DE-
CAMP WITH PRECIPITATION.

THE next adventure I shall have occasion to relate, more fully confirms the justice of the remark, that the connexions formed by persons during temporary confinement in a jail commonly lead to further acts of wickedness, and frequently entail on the parties a more severe punishment than that which they have just escaped. This was exactly my unhappy case, and now I come to the most fatal era of my eventful life.

In the same ward with myself were confined two brothers, very genteel young men, who had been recently cast for death for privately stealing some valuable rings, &c. from the shop of a jeweller in Leadenhall street. As a conformity of character, or similarity of pursuits, is the strongest source of friendship, so these persons and myself had become very intimately

acquainted. In the course of our frequent conversations on the subject with which we were all three alike most conversant, the brothers informed me that they had, like myself, made a successful tour of the jewellers' shops in London; and on our comparing notes as to the particular persons we had robbed, or attempted to rob, they pointed out about half a dozen shops, which, it appeared, I had omitted to visit, arising either from their making no display of their goods, or from their being situated in private streets, where I had no idea of finding any such trades. Though at that time neither they nor myself entertained much hope of my acquittal, it was agreed that in the event of my being so fortunate as to recover my freedom, I should pay my respects to the several tradesmen I had so overlooked; and I promised, in case I was successful, to make them a pecuniary acknowledgment in return for their information. At the moment of my joyful departure from Newgate, they accordingly furnished me with a list of the shops in question, and gave me full instructions and useful hints for my guidance therein. They particularly pointed out Mr Bilger, a goldsmith and jeweller of the first eminence in Piccadilly. This gentleman, they assured me, I should find, in the technical phrase, a *good flat*. They advised me to bespeak a diamond ring, or similar article, and to request a sight of some loose diamonds for the purpose of selecting such stones as I might wish to have set, informing me that he was generally provided with a large quantity, which he would not fail to show me, and that I might with ease purloin a good number of them. A day or two after my release, I made the prescribed experiments, and was fortunate enough to succeed pretty well at nearly every shop; but I reserved Mr Bilger for my final essay, as he was the principal object of consideration, and from whom I expected to obtain the most valuable booty. On the day se'nnight after my trial

at the Old Bailey, I prepared in due form to pay him a visit. About five o'clock in the evening, I entered his shop, dressed in the most elegant style, having a valuable gold watch and appendages, a gold eye-glass, &c. I had posted my old friend and aid-de-camp, Bromley, at the door, in order to be in readiness to act as circumstances might require, and particularly to watch the motions of Mr Bilger and his assistants on my quitting the premises. On my entrance Mrs Bilger issued from a back parlour behind the shop, and politely enquiring my business, I told her I wished to see Mr Bilger; she immediately rang a bell, which brought down her husband from the upper apartments. He saluted me with a low bow, and handed me a seat. I was glad to find no other person in the shop, Mrs Bilger having again retired. I now assumed the air of a Bond street loungeur, and informed Mr Bilger that I had been recommended by a gentleman of my acquaintance to deal with him, having occasion for a very elegant diamond ring, and requested to see his assortment. Mr Bilger expressed his concern that he happened not to have a single article of that description by him, but if I could without inconvenience call again, he would undertake in one hour to procure me a selection from his working-jeweller, to whom he would immediately despatch a messenger. I affected to feel somewhat disappointed, but, looking at my watch, after a moment's reflection, I said, "Well, Mr Bilger, I have an appointment at the Canon coffee-house, which requires my attendance, and if you will without fail have the articles ready, I may probably look in a little after six." This he promised faithfully to do, declaring how much he felt obliged by my condescension; and I sauntered out of the shop, Mr Bilger attending me in the most obsequious manner to the outer door. After walking a short distance, Bromley tapped me on the shoulder, and inquired what conduct I meant next to pursue; for

he had viewed my proceedings through a glass-door in the shop, and saw that I had not executed my grand design. I related to Bromley the result of my conversation with Mr Bilger, and added that I meant to retire to the nearest public-house, where we could enjoy a pipe and a glass of negus until the expiration of the hour to which I had limited myself. We accordingly regaled ourselves at a very snug house, nearly opposite Bilger's, until about half after six, when I again repaired to the scene of action, leaving Bromley, as at first, posted at the door. Mr Bilger received me with increased respect, and producing a small card box, expressed his sorrow that his workman had only been enabled to send three rings for my inspection, but that if they were not to my taste he should feel honoured and obliged in taking my directions for having one made, and flattered himself he should execute the order to my satisfaction. I proceeded to examine the rings he produced, one of which was marked sixteen guineas, another nine guineas, and the third six guineas. They were all extremely beautiful, but I affected to consider them as too paltry, telling Mr Bilger that I wanted one to present to a lady, and that I wished to have a ring of greater value than the whole three put together, as a few guineas would not be an object in the price. Mr Bilger's son, who was also his partner, now joined us, and was desired by his father to sketch a draught in pencil of some fancy rings, agreeable to the directions I should give him. The three rings I had viewed, were now removed to the end of the counter next the window, and I informed the young man that I wished to have something of a cluster, a large brilliant in the centre, surrounded with smaller ones; but repeated my desire that no expense might be spared to render the article strictly elegant, and worthy a lady's acceptance. The son having sketched a design of several rings on a card, I examined them with attention, and appeared

in doubt which to prefer, but desired to see some loose diamonds, in order to form a better idea of the size, &c. of each ring described in the drawing. Mr Bilger, however, declared, he had not any by him. It is probable he spoke truth, or he might have lost such numbers by shewing them, as to deter him from exhibiting them in future. Without having made up my mind on the subject, I now requested to see some of his most fashionable brooches or shirt-pins. Mr Bilger produced a shew-glass, containing a great variety of articles in pearl, but he had nothing of the kind in diamonds. I took up two or three of the brooches, and immediately *sunk* a very handsome one, marked three guineas, in my coat sleeve. I next purloined a beautiful clasp for a lady's waist, consisting of stones set in gold, which had the brilliancy and appearance of real diamonds, but marked only four guineas. I should probably have gone still deeper, but at this moment a lady coming in, desired to look at some ear-rings, and the younger Mr Bilger immediately quitted his father to attend upon her at the other end of the shop. It struck me that now was my time for a decisive stroke. The card containing the diamond rings, procured from the maker, lying very near the shew-glass I was viewing, and many small articles irregularly placed round about them, the candles not throwing much light upon that particular spot, and Mr Bilger's attention being divided between myself and the lady, to whom he frequently addressed himself, I suddenly took the three rings from the card, and committed them to my sleeve to join the brooch and lady's clasp ; but had them so situated that I could in a moment have released and replaced them on the counter, had an inquiry being made for them. I then looked at my watch, and observing that I was going to the theatre, told Mr Bilger that I would not trouble him any further, as the articles before me were too tawdry and common

to please me, but that I would put the card of draughts in my pocket-book, and if I did not meet with a ring of the kind I wanted before Monday or Tuesday, I would certainly call again and give him final directions. I was then drawing on my gloves, being anxious to quit the shop while I was well; but Mr Bilger, who seemed delighted with the prospect of my custom, begged so earnestly that I would allow him to shew me his brilliant assortment of gold watches that I could not refuse to gratify him, though I certainly incurred a great risk by my compliance. I, therefore, answered, "Really, Mr Bilger, I am loth to give you that unnecessary trouble, as I have, you may perceive, a very good watch already, in point of performance; though it cost me a mere trifle, only twenty guineas; but it answers my purpose as well as a more valuable one. However, as I may probably, before long, want an elegant watch for a lady, I don't care if I just run my eye over them." Mr Bilger replied, that the greater part of his stock were fancy watches adapted for ladies, and he defied all London united to exhibit a finer collection. He then took from his window a shew-glass, containing about thirty most beautiful watches, some ornamented with pearls or diamonds, others elegantly enamelled, or chased in the most delicate style. They were of various prices, from thirty to one hundred guineas, and the old gentleman, rubbing his hands with an air of rapture, exclaimed, "There they are, sir; a most fashionable assortment of goods; allow me to recommend them; they're all a-going, sir—all a-going." I smiled inwardly at the latter part of this speech, and thought to myself, "I wish they were going, with all my heart, along with the diamond rings." I answered, they were certainly very handsome, but I would defer a minute inspection of them till my next visit, when I should have more time to spare. These watches were ranged in exact order, in five parallel lines, and be-

tween each watch was placed a gold seal or other trinket appertaining to a lady's watch. It was no easy matter, therefore, to take away a single article without its being instantly missed, unless the economy of the whole had been previously deranged. I contrived, however, to displace a few of the trinkets, on pretence of admiring them, and ventured to secrete one very rich gold seal marked six guineas. I then declared I could stay no longer, as I had appointed to meet a party at the theatre; but that I would certainly call again in a few days, and lay out some money in return for the trouble I had given. Mr Bilger expressed his thanks in the most respectful terms, and waited upon me to the door, where he took leave of me with a very low *congé à la mode de France*, of which country he was a native. I now put the best foot foremost, and having gained a remote street, turned my head, and perceived Bromley at my heels, who seized my hand, congratulating me on my success, and complimenting me on the address I had shewn in this exploit; for he had witnessed all that passed, and knew that I had succeeded in my object, by the manner in which I quitted the shop. He informed me that Mr Bilger had returned to his counter, and, without attending to the arrangement of the articles thereon, had joined his son who was still waiting upon the lady, and that he, Bromley, had finally left them both engaged with her.

Having thus happily achieved this adventure, we returned to my lodgings, where I displayed the booty I had made, and gratified Bromley with a couple of guineas for his trouble, which fully satisfied him, as I did not take him with me on terms of equal partnership. The next morning, Saturday, on reviewing the articles, my wife was so much pleased with one of the rings, (a beautiful ruby, surrounded with rose-diamonds, price six guineas,) which exactly fitted her fore-finger, that I suffered her to retain it for wearing

on extraordinary occasions; and I myself determined to keep the one marked sixteen guineas, (which was a double-rowed brilliant half hoop) for my little finger. As to the nine-guinea ring (which was composed of brilliants, having a space for hair in the centre) I sold it immediately, together with the gold seal, to a Jew receiver, with whom I had frequent dealings. The brooch I also took a fancy to for my own wear, and the gold clasp I presented to my wife. In the evening of this day I visited my friends in Newgate, (the two brothers,) and acknowledged the service they had rendered me by a suitable present, besides regaling the whole ward with a treat of ale and porter.

In the interval between my discharge from confinement and my visit to Mr Bilger, I one day went to the shop of a pawnbroker in Brydges street, Covent garden, for the purpose of pledging some seals, rings, and other trinkets, which I had purloined at the several shops to which the brothers had recommended me. I had frequently pledged similar articles at this shop, as well as many others, because I could get nearly fifty per cent more by that means than a common receiver would give for the same goods, and I afterwards sold the duplicates among my acquaintances, or to the Jews, by which I gained a still further advance. I entered a private box, as is usual with persons who wish to observe secrecy; and the pawnbroker, whose name was Turner, coming himself to wait on me, I produced my goods, demanding a certain sum upon them. Mr Turner having looked over the articles, pulled out the sliding shutter which extends across the counter, so as to obscure the customer from the view even of a person in the adjoining box, and having taken this precaution, he spoke to me, in a very respectful manner, to the following effect: "Sir, I hope you will excuse what I am going to say; but having observed that you frequently pledge similar goods to these at our shop, which are after-

wards taken out by other persons, I take for granted you are in the habit of selling the duplicates : it is not my wish to be impertinently curious, but my reason for asking, is, that if I am right in my conjecture, I conceive you might as well give me the opportunity of purchasing them as a stranger. I am ready to give you a fair price, as I have opportunities of disposing of such goods in the way of trade, and without putting them in the window, or exposing them at all. Or, if you prefer selling them at once, I will offer you the utmost farthing I can give, at a word, and save both you and myself the trouble of a duplicate." All this he uttered in a low but earnest voice, and with every appearance of sincerity. Perceiving me to hesitate, he added with increased emphasis, "Depend on it, sir, I'll deal upon the square with you ; I don't mean to take the smallest advantage, I assure you." These last words determined me. I thought it improbable that he could have any motive for deceiving me, and knowing that many of the pawnbrokers in London are men of the world, who, while they preserve outwardly a fair reputation, are at the bottom arrant receivers of stolen goods, I supposed this man to be one of them ; I therefore answered that he was not mistaken in his opinion ; that I was myself in the habit of dealing in such goods, and being sometimes pressed for money, I was then obliged to pledge or sell a few articles to relieve a temporary inconvenience ; and that, relying upon his promises of fair dealing, I had no objection, when such was the case, to give him an opportunity of becoming a purchaser. He thanked me for the favour and desired I would set a price upon the articles I had now brought. I did so, and he offered me at once a sum equal to what I expected, though somewhat less than what I asked him. Having received the money agreed for, I departed, well pleased with having formed so good a connexion. I only describe this interview as explanatory of a circumstance I shall by and by have occasion to relate.

Anybody would suppose that I might have been satisfied with my late success at Bilger and Son's, and it will be hardly credited that I should have the temerity to pay them a second visit, agreeably to the promise I gave Mr Bilger at parting : but, such was nevertheless the fact. On the Monday following the Friday on which I robbed them, having occasion for a little ready money to pay an instalment to my tailor, with whom I kept a running account, I requested my wife to take the diamond-ring I had kept for my own wear, and pledge it at Turner's for five guineas, whilst I myself went with her ring to another shop, and borrowed three guineas on it. I conceived there could be no danger attending this proceeding, as there was nothing remarkable in either of the rings, and I had the fullest conviction that the pawnbroker to whom I applied was actually such a character as, from the conversation of Turner, I doubted not the latter to be : besides, it was in my power at a minute's warning to have redeemed them both, and I intended so to do in a few days. The next day, Tuesday, I determined to re-visit Mr Bilger, against the advice both of my wife and Bromley, who censured such a step as an act of downright madness, which indeed it certainly was : but I was so infatuated as to think it possible that, as there was another party in the shop as well as myself, the suspicion might have attached to her ; or, that my appearance and address would so far operate in my favour, as at least to leave Bilger in doubt who to suspect : in which case, my calling again exactly at the time I had promised, would certainly remove every shadow of such doubt, and I might perhaps be enabled to obtain one or more of the valuable watches Mr Bilger had shewn me. To make everything secure I intended to take Bromley with me, who could observe the reception I met with, and in the event of my being detained on suspicion, I directed him to hasten to my wife with the information, who was in-

stantly to redeem the two rings we had pledged, and then effectually conceal the whole of the stolen articles beyond the reach of discovery; so that no property being found on, or traced to me, I must inevitably have been discharged. These precautions were certainly sufficient to prevent any ill consequences, but still I shall ever condemn myself for so rash an act. About six o'clock in the evening, myself and Bromley set out on this ill-fated expedition. Arriving at Bilger's, I entered with an air of confidence, and finding the son only in the shop, I addressed him with a good-natured smile in these words: "Well, sir, you see I'm punctual to my promise: is your father within?" He answered in the affirmative, with a mixture of surprise and doubt in his countenance; then stepping backwards, he called Mr Bilger, saying in a significant tone, "Father, here is the gentleman come about the diamond ring." Mr Bilger then advancing, saluted me with a formal coldness, which convinced me that I was suspected. However, it was then too late to recede, so laying my hat upon the counter, and drawing a stool, I said, with a familiar air, "Well, Mr Bilger, I have called to give you directions for making this ring, but I must beg that you will spare no pains in the execution, as I repeat that the price will not be an object; only tell me candidly at what time you will undertake to have it ready, as I am going out of town in a few days." He replied, that I might depend on it by Saturday evening. "Very well," said I, "that will be time enough." Mr Bilger then desired his son to take down my instructions, for which purpose the latter opened his day-book, and I took from my pocket the card of draughts, in which I pointed out the one I had determined on. Then describing minutely the various particulars, the kind of shank, &c. the young man wrote what he thought necessary, appearing to pay the strictest attention to my directions, and concluded

with requesting my name and address. I answered (what first came into my head, as my only object now was to get decently clear of the shop) "Mr Deakin, 13 Curzon street, May fair." I next desired Mr Bilger to shew me again his assortment of lady's watches, as I intended to purchase one when the ring was completed; but the old gentleman replied with evident embarrassment, that he really had none in the house, but that his son should wait upon me with a selection when the ring was finished. I answered carelessly, "That will do very well, Mr Bilger. I hope, sir, you will not fail to be punctual; let it be an elegant article, and don't neglect to send the watches. I shall now bid you good evening." Then buttoning my coat, &c., I advanced toward the door, expecting every moment to be detained, or at least questioned about the three diamond rings. Nothing of the sort, however, occurred. Mr Bilger attended me to the door with as much politeness, though not quite the same warmth as at my first visit; and I was not at all sorry when I found myself at a distance from the shop. My watchful friend Bromley soon joined me, with the information that Bilger had stood above a minute gazing after me before he closed the door, and that he clearly perceived I had had a narrow escape. Having satisfied myself by making the experiment, I now hastened home to relieve the anxiety of my wife; and concluding I should neither see or hear any more of Messrs Bilger and Son, turned my attention to new projects for "raising the wind."

A few days afterwards, calling at Turner's, the pawnbroker, to dispose of some trifling articles, that person after apologizing for the liberty he was about to take, begged leave to ask if my "good lady" had not pledged a diamond ring with him a few days before for five guineas? Surprised at this question, I hesitated; on which he continued, "I assure you, sir, I have no impertinent motive for the question, but

a lady of my acquaintance having seen the article, is very much in love with it ; and if it should be yours, and that you are inclined hereafter to sell it, I should be happy to purchase it for her. The lady who pledged it having frequently come to redeem articles left by you, I concluded from thence that she was your wife." As I was willing to be upon my guard, I answered that my wife had indeed several rings, and it was possible he might be right in his conjecture, but I was ignorant of her having pledged such an article ; that I would, however, make inquiry on the subject, and let him know the next time I saw him. Having communicated this conversation to my wife, she saw nothing extraordinary in it, as the ring was a very elegant trinket, and would naturally excite the admiration of any lady. The next day I again called upon Turner, and told him that the ring he mentioned was the property of my wife, but at present she had no mind to part with it, and here the matter dropped.

Three or four days after this last interview, having been successful at the theatres, and my purse being replenished, I determined to redeem the ring pledged at Turner's, and taking the duplicate with me, I entered one of the private boxes as usual, from a back door in Russell court, and calling to the shopman, produced my ticket, and desired to have the ring. The lad took the former out of my hand and laid it on a shelf ; then proceeded with the business he was before engaged in, without offering to attend me. I thought this very odd, and seeing Turner himself at the far end of the counter, writing duplicates for some women, and pretending to be so much engaged as not to notice me, though I was sensible he must, I began, as the phrase is, to *smell a rat*. I then repeated my request to the boy, with some impatience and a louder voice, on which the latter went up to his master, and I heard him whisper, " Sir, here's the gentleman come for the diamond ring." His master, without turning his head,

or looking off his book, (though he always used to pay the most eager attention to me,) said something I could not hear; and the lad approaching the box in which I stood, told me his master would be glad if I would step round to the front door, (meaning the door of the public shop, which opened into Brydges street.) I was now more than ever surprised, and convinced that mischief was intended me. However, as in such cases I was often too rash, and despised fear as unbecoming an adventurer of my address and appearance, I answered, "Oh, by all means, my man, I'll go round;" which I immediately did; but on entering the shop I was surprised to find Mr Turner had vanished. I then said to the boy, with a smile of gaiety, "Why, my good lad, I don't see your master, now I've taken the trouble to come here." The boy replied, "Sir, my master will wait upon you directly; he's only gone backwards to speak to the servant." This was enough for me. I no longer doubted that he was gone to send for an officer; and that it was therefore high time for me to make sail while I was well. I therefore appeared for a moment satisfied with the boy's answer; but seeming suddenly to recollect myself, I said to him, "My wife is at the door, I believe I may as well ask her to step in." Then immediately opening the door, which fell to with a pulley, I quitted the shop, and turning the corner got into Russell court, through which I ran with all my speed, nor stopped till I found myself at a considerable distance, and out of all danger. I then walked home by a circuitous route, and related the adventure to my wife, who was of course seriously alarmed, and joined with me in reprobating the treachery of the pawnbroker, for whose perfidious conduct, after the assurances he had given me, we were at a loss to account.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

TAKE A HOUSE IN ST GEORGE'S FIELDS. STAY AT HOME FOR SEVERAL WEEKS. AT LENGTH I VENTURE OUT IN QUEST OF MONEY. MY IMPRUDENT OBSTINACY IN ENTERING A HOUSE OF ILL-REPUTE AGAINST THE ADVICE AND ENTREATIES OF MY WIFE. I AM TAKEN IN CUSTODY, AND CARRIED TO THE WATCH-HOUSE. DISTRESS OF MY WIFE ON THE OCCASION.

As my person was well known to all the surrounding pawnbrokers, and my real abode to many of them, myself and wife were under considerable alarm at every knock we heard at the house-door that evening; and it was my wife's earnest entreaty that I should the next morning look out for a lodging in a remote part of the town, where I might lie concealed for awhile until the affair had cooled. Accordingly I went out with that intention at an early hour, and engaged a first floor very neatly furnished, in Webber row, St George's fields; to which we removed with our effects, in the most private manner, the very next day. As I had taken care that we were not watched in our removal, we found ourselves freed from any immediate anxiety in our new abode; but I was afraid to shew myself at all in the neighbourhood of our late residence, nor could I venture even to the theatres in quest of money. We therefore continued domesticated until after Christmas; but finding the rent we paid (fourteen shillings per week) to come rather heavy upon us, as I was getting nothing, but living on the little I had by me, I determined to hire a small house

in one of the new streets near the Obelisk, and to purchase such articles of furniture as were indispensable, whatever sacrifices I might make to enable me to do so. I very soon met with a neat little house, in Gun street, at the low rent of five shillings a week. It consisted indeed of only two rooms, one over the other, with a small kitchen behind, but was sufficiently large for our purpose. I was so assiduous in this undertaking, that in a few days I had purchased every necessary article for our use, and we immediately entered on the premises. It is true, having but little ready money, I was compelled on this occasion to pledge my watch, chain, and seals, together with several trinkets of my own and my wife's, and many articles of our wearing apparel, but of the latter we had both a pretty ample stock. We were then obliged to live as frugally as possible, and during the whole month of January I never once stirred out of the street we resided in, except on the following occasion. Being anxious to see poor Bromley, whom I had not had an opportunity of apprising of our removal from Drury lane, I determined to venture out, and endeavour to find him at one of the houses I knew he frequented in that neighbourhood: for this purpose I disguised myself as much as I could, and going late in the evening to a public house in Parker's lane, I found a number of dissolute characters of the lowest class assembled there, but on looking round saw no appearance of Bromley. Having drank a glass at the bar, I was on the point of quitting the house to seek further, when a girl of the town, of whom there were a number present, tapped me on the shoulder, and taking me aside observed, that she was astonished at my madness in venturing to that quarter of the town, considering the situation in which I stood, and the consequent risk I incurred. This girl had formerly cohabited with Bromley, and had by that means known me for some time. As I knew her to be incapable of any bad de-

sign, I requested her to explain herself more fully. She then said, that she had gone a few days before this to the shop of Lane, a pawnbroker in Drury lane, on some business of her own, and that one of the shopmen inquired if she had lately seen Vaux? desiring her, if she met with me, to caution me to keep out of the way, as I was advertised and very fully described in printed hand-bills, circulated among the pawnbrokers, in which I stood charged with robbing a jeweller's shop in Piccadilly; that being on intimate terms with this shopman, she had obtained a sight of the hand-bill in question, and had read with her own eyes a confirmation of what the young man had told her. She now repeated to me the tenor of the same, stating that a reward of ten guineas was offered for my apprehension, and ten guineas more on my conviction; that the articles stolen, consisting of diamond rings, &c., were described, as was also my dress and person, in the minutest manner, not excepting even my whiskers, eyes, and teeth, the watch and appendages I wore, the mourning ring on my finger, eye-glass, &c. She therefore strongly exhorted me to avoid this part of the town, in which I was so well known; and promised if she saw Bromley, to direct him to a place I named, at which he would hear of me. Having gratified this well-meaning woman with a small present, I returned home with all the speed I could; and ruminating in my way on what I had heard, I was now convinced beyond a doubt, that Bilger junior, at the time he pretended to be taking directions of me for the ring I bespoke, was actually intent upon taking a description of my person, &c., which he wrote down in the book before him, in order that, should his father's suspicions prove well founded, a proper search might be made after me. This news was not likely to alleviate the anxiety of my wife for my safety, or to encourage me in sallying forth with the view of recruiting my finances, which were now at a very low ebb.

At length, however, necessity compelled me to waive every consideration, for everything we could conveniently spare was in pawn, including even my books, some of which were valuable. I therefore dressed myself in my usual manner, and on Tuesday evening, the 31st of January 1809, left my home with an intention of trying my luck at one of the theatres ; but in my way thither I was induced to enter a shop, (namely, Sharp's, the razor maker, corner of Ludgate hill) of which I had conceived some hopes ; and fortune favoured me so far, that I obtained a booty of silver fruit-knives, pencil-cases, pocket-books with instruments, &c., which I estimated at four or five guineas. I was so pleased with this success that I returned home, satisfied with my night's gain, and gave up my former design of going to the theatre. My wife was agreeably surprised at my premature return ; and as it was then but seven o'clock, I proposed to her that we should take a walk as far as Blackfriars' bridge, as she had of late been closely confined to the house, and I conceived her health required air and exercise. She immediately assented, and having locked up the house, we proceeded towards the bridge ; on arriving at which she would have turned back, but I persuaded her to cross the water, and go as far as the end of Fleet street. We there entered a liquor-shop and took some refreshment ; and my wife then earnestly pressed me to return, for fear of meeting with some of the officers who might know me ; but I now entreated her to walk as far as Clare market, as I wished to see a young man, who had promised to meet me or to leave a note for me at a certain public-house, which I had sometimes frequented when I lived in that neighbourhood. I had in fact intended to call there in my way to or from the theatre, in order to settle a plan for accompanying this person and several others to a grand fight, which was to have taken place the next day at Moulsey-hurst, between two celebrated pugilists,

and at which we expected to reap a plentiful harvest. The going to this house was the maddest act I could possibly have committed, for the Bow street officers were in the habit of visiting it at all hours; and several of them had seen me there at various times dressed exactly in the manner described in the handbills I have mentioned. My wife, who appears to have had too sure a presentiment of what the consequence would be, used every art to dissuade me from my purpose, but in vain. I assured her that I would not stop five minutes; and that, to prevent danger, she herself should first enter the house and observe whether there were any officers in it, in which event I could but retire without going in, and immediately return home. Finding I was obstinately determined on this rash step, she accompanied me, and on arriving near the house, I sent her in to make observations. The landlord (who had himself been an old thief) received her very courteously; and inquiring for me, she privately asked him if there was any danger of the officers coming there? To which he answered in the negative, and assured her I might with safety make my appearance. She accordingly gave me the signal, and I entered the public tap-room, in which I found about twenty notorious characters assembled at different tables, some drinking and smoking, others employed in gambling with cards, &c. The young man above mentioned had left a short note, which the landlord now put into my hand; in which I was requested to meet him the next morning at a certain time and place, adding that he had engaged a chaise, and that a seat was reserved for me. My wife now again pressed me to return after taking a glass at the bar; but my evil genius prevailed, and I stipulated that I should smoke one pipe of tobacco, and then would willingly retire. I accordingly took a seat, placing my wife between myself and my old acquaintance George W—k—n, who invited us to join him. I was situated with my back to the door of

the room, which opened into a passage leading to the street. I occupied the very end of the seat or bench, which had an elbow, on which I rested my right arm, and there were at the same table three or four other persons besides our party. I had scarcely lighted my pipe when I observed two men (strangers to me) enter the room, and whisper with the landlord; and I thought I perceived the landlord, while answering them, to glance his eye upon me; but I only mention this by-the-by, as I had the fullest conviction of the landlord's integrity, and the strangers had not the least appearance of officers; consequently, the circumstance did not at all alarm me. I had been about half an hour in the house, and was on the point of taking my leave, when I heard the door pushed open, and, as is natural in such cases, I involuntarily turned my head; when to my utter confusion and alarm, I perceived two officers enter the room. As I thought it possible I might escape their notice, I pulled my hat over my eyes, and turning my head towards my wife and friend on my left hand, pretended to be in earnest conversation with them; but how can I express my feelings, when the officers walked immediately up to me, as naturally as if they had been sitting in my company the whole evening; and one of them looking me full in the face, said, "Mr Vaux, we want you!" With as much composure as I could assume, I answered that he was mistaken in addressing me, for that was not my name. The fellow replied that he was certainly right, but begged that I would step out with him into the passage, and he would explain himself more fully. I was so weak (or rather so confounded with surprise) as to comply with this request; and I was no sooner in the passage, and the tap-room door closed, than the two ruffians laid hold of me, one on each side, and hurried me away with the greatest impetuosity. Having got a few yards from the house, they stopped to view me by the light of a lamp, and one of them

having attentively surveyed my features, (probably to compare them with the advertisement,) said to his fellow, "I'm sure we are right, Jack; he answers the description: come along." As they were conducting me to St Martin's watch-house, they put several questions to me respecting my knowledge of a jeweller's shop in Piccadilly, my being tried at the Old Bailey in November sessions, &c.; all which were of course unavailing, as I denied any knowledge of their meaning, but which too well convinced me that they had a thorough knowledge of my person and character, acquired no doubt from the treacherous information of some of my dissolute acquaintances. One of them observed, that if they had not met with me this night, they should have done so the next day at the fight, so that it had only prevented them from seeing the battle; perhaps they only surmised that I should have gone there, it being the custom for most of the London thieves to attend such spectacles; but I have sometimes thought my intention of going was communicated to them, either by the person I was to have accompanied, or by the landlord who delivered me his open note on the subject. The other observed, that I had made a good thing of it at the Haymarket the preceding summer; adding, "We wondered who the devil it was that was so busy there: we did not know you so well then as we do now, or we should have spoiled your sport." The fact was, that these two vagabonds were on constant duty every night inside of that theatre; and I consequently knew them well, long before this fatal rencontre; but I always took care to shun them, and had never excited their suspicion, as I was not once, during the whole season, detected in the course of my operations at that house.

We now arrived at the watch-house, where they proceeded to search me closely, but found nothing that had any relation to the present charge; and I must not omit that their first attention was directed to my

little finger, no doubt in search of the mourning ring, mentioned in the hand-bills; but the said ring was at this time deposited as a pledge for the loan of one pound at a certain pawnbroker's, and I had on, in lieu thereof, a plain gold ring of trifling value; this they examined, and finding (to use their words) that there were "no letters on it," they suffered me to retain it. I happened unluckily to have on this night the very same dress I wore when I visited Mr Bilger, namely, a black coat and waistcoat, blue pantaloons, Hessian boots, and the same hat, which was remarkable, being in the extreme of the newest fashion. The only variation was, that I had neither the gold watch, eyeglass, or mourning ring about me, nor had I any powder in my hair; and I had on over my other clothes a brown great-coat. After searching me, they gave me in charge to the watch-house keeper, and desiring to know what name I chose to give in, as I denied being called Vaux, I assured them my name was James Lowe, this being the name of my much-loved grandfather, and the first that occurred to me. In this name I was therefore entered in the charge-book, and having told the keeper that they should call for me in the morning, they departed. When left to ruminate on my hopeless condition, nothing affected me so much as the distress my poor wife must suffer on my being thus torn from her, and what heightened my affliction was, the consciousness that had I listened to her affectionate advice, I should probably have avoided this misfortune, and been at that moment happy in her society by my own fire-side: but mature reflection convinced me that, my time being come, it was impossible to escape the fate to which I was born, and destined from the moment of that birth. I therefore bowed with resignation to a fate, which by my vicious conduct I had certainly merited; and applied for consolation to a pipe and a jug of ale, which I was permitted to send for, and which indulgence I compensated by liberally treat-

ing the keeper and his wife, according to the established usage of such places.

I afterwards learnt that my wife had fainted immediately on my apprehension, and continued for some minutes in violent hysterics, on recovering from which our friend W—k—n had kindly conducted her home, and consoled her at parting with the assurance that he would not sleep till he had found out to what place I was conveyed, and done all in his power to render my condition as tolerable as circumstances would admit. But his inquiries were ineffectual, and it was not till the following day that he could obtain an interview with me.

CHAPTER XXIX.

DISCOVER THAT I HAVE BEEN BETRAYED. EXAMINED AT BOW STREET, AND COMMITTED FOR TRIAL. SENT TO NEWGATE. PREPARE FOR MY DEFENCE. MY TRIAL AND CONVICTION.

ABOUT an hour after the officers had left me, they returned to the watch-house, bringing in prisoner a well-dressed gentleman in a state of ebriety, accompanied by several of his friends, who it seemed had been taken in custody for riotous conduct at the Hay-market theatre. As soon as they had given charge of this person, and again withdrawn, the gentleman, whose friends had also taken their leave, seated himself near the fire, and entered into conversation with me on the subject of his apprehension. He informed me, that having in the beginning of the evening had a quarrel with another gentleman in the boxes, and their altercation disturbing the audience, he had been

taken into custody by these officers as the aggressor ; but that having apologised for his conduct, and made his peace with his opponent, he had been liberated, and the officers had suddenly quitted him ; that about ten o'clock, however, to his great surprise, the two rascally constables (as he termed them) had again apprehended him, under colour of the original charge, and conveyed him to the watch-house ; and that in their way, they stated that they should have done so on his first apprehension, but that they were suddenly sent for to the other end of the town, for the express purpose of taking a notorious thief, of whom they had received information ! The gentleman here continued (little supposing he was speaking to the identical person), " Some d——d housebreaker, or highwayman, I suppose. I don't know who the rascal was." The reader may be sure I took no pains to inform him ; but commiserating his case, and condemning the base conduct of the officers, we conversed together on indifferent subjects for about an hour, and were then shewn to separate beds in the same room, where we were locked up till morning. It now appeared evident that I had been betrayed, but by whom I am to this day ignorant ; sometimes suspecting the landlord ; at others the young man I have before mentioned ; and sometimes, one of the company who sat at table with me ; as I was afterwards informed that the whole room being much alarmed at my sudden apprehension, and the manner in which it took place, some one remarked that I must certainly have been villanously betrayed. Upon which this man (whose name was Bill White, otherwise Conky-beau,) immediately changed colour, and said, " I hope nobody suspects me ; I certainly did leave the room, but it was only for a few minutes, in order to get a little tobacco at the next shop." At all events, there must have been much expedition used, for I was not above half an hour in the house, and the distance from thence to the Haymarket theatre is at least a mile. Indeed the officers confessed to me after-

wards, that I had been *sold* (as the phrase is), but declared that no bribe should induce them to disclose the party.

The ensuing morning, about ten, the officers conducted me to Bow street, where Mr justice Graham presided. On being put to the bar, I observed Mr Bilger, senior, and the perfidious pawnbroker, in waiting; the former viewed me with attention, and seemed immediately convinced of my identity, of which he informed the magistrate. Having then stated the particulars of his charge against me, (which I need not here repeat) the pawnbroker produced the fatal ring, stating that he received it from a woman, whom I afterwards acknowledged to be my wife; he also produced a pearl and amethyst brooch, set in gold, which he deposed to purchasing from me among some other articles of the like nature. Mr Bilger swore that he believed the former to be his property, and the working jeweller, who had supplied the three rings for my inspection, swore positively to its being one of them; as to the brooch, Mr Bilger would not positively swear, but fully believed it to be the one he lost. In this, however, he was mistaken; for I have already stated that I kept that brooch for my own wear, and it was at this moment in pledge for one pound in the Borough: but I had, a few days previous to my robbing Mr Bilger, purloined, among other trinkets, from a shop in the city, a brooch so exactly similar, that on comparing the two together, I was in doubt which to retain; but the pearls in Bilger's being rather larger, I preferred the latter, and disposed of the other to Turner, as he had truly said. When asked if I had any defence to offer, I merely answered that I was not the person, having never seen Mr Bilger or his shop in my life. Mr Graham observed, the case was so clear that he should immediately commit me; but having understood that many jewellers, &c., who had been robbed, were in attendance to identify me, he inquired for them; the officers,

however stated that none were present, except a shopman of Mr Chandler in Leicester-fields, who had been a considerable sufferer; but on this young man viewing me, he declared I was not the person who had been at his master's shop; in which, by-the-by, he was egregiously mistaken. The magistrate then committed me for trial on Mr Bilger's charge; and ordered that I should be brought up again on that day se'nnight (the 8th of February) in order that the different shop-keepers might have notice to attend. I was now conveyed to Tothill fields Bridewell, where I continued a week. My first object was to establish a communication with my wife; but I was afraid of suffering her to visit me, lest she might have been detained as an accomplice. She, however, sent her sister to me daily, who brought me every needful requisite for my use and comfort in the prison; and among the rest, a change of apparel of a very different kind from that in which I was apprehended. Having put on these clothes, I sent the others back by the bearer; and the same day, a barber attending, whom I had sent for to shave me, I requested him to cut off my whiskers, and to crop my hair close. He did so, and I now cut so different a figure, that no person could possibly identify me, unless intimately acquainted with my features. Had I been enabled to take these measures before I appeared at Bow street, it is probable Mr Bilger would not have ventured to swear to me; but unfortunately they were adopted too late to render me any essential service. When the officers came to the prison, and saw the metamorphose I had undergone, they were, however, highly enraged; charged the turnkeys with gross neglect of duty and want of vigilance, in suffering the means to be admitted, and threatened to represent the circumstances to the magistrate. I laughed heartily at their chagrin, and said all I could to heighten their vexation. On the day appointed, I was brought up for re-examination;

but it seemed the tradesmen who were expected had not thought it worth their while to attend, for none made their appearance. Mr Graham viewed me with evident surprise, demanding why I was so differently dressed, and what I had done with my whiskers.* I answered, that I wore whatever I found most convenient to myself, and as to whiskers, I never had any. His worship stared at this assertion, and declared, that when he first examined me I had very large whiskers, and my hair dressed in the fashionable mode. "However," added he, "I see through your design; but it has been executed too late, and this stratagem will not serve your turn." I was then finally committed to Newgate, as the session was to commence on that day week (the 15th). My unhappy wife was waiting the issue of my examination, in the neighbourhood of the police office, and on learning the result, took coach, and was at the door of Newgate as soon as myself. The officers who escorted me having retired, both my wife and I were very kindly received by the principal turnkey, who instantly recognised us as Mr and Mrs Hardy, and expressed his concern at my so soon becoming again an inmate of Newgate. He then ordered me to have a light iron put on; and requesting to know what ward I wished to go into, I chose the same I had before been a member of, and to this room my wife accompanied me. After receiving the compliments of such of the prisoners as were before my fellow-lodgers (among whom were the two brothers) all of whom vied with each other in contributing to our accommo-

* The public papers, in describing my second examination, had the following paragraph:—"The prisoner, on his first examination, was dressed in the most fashionable style; but he was now completely metamorphosed, being dressed in a drab great-coat, jockey-books, and a Belcher handkerchief, so as to have the appearance of a stage-coachman."

dation, we partook of some tea; and having been a fortnight separated from my beloved wife, I would not suffer her to quit me until the next morning.

I had now but a few days to prepare for my approaching trial; and though I entertained no hopes of escaping conviction, I determined to employ a counsel; and who so proper (thought I) as my good friend Mr Knapp, who had so adroitly brought me off on a late occasion. I therefore drew a brief, in which I dwelt strongly on some particular points, both of law and fact, and enclosed it, with the customary fee, in a letter to that gentleman, reminding him of my being his client in November session, and trusting he would do all in his power to extricate me from my present embarrassment. Mr Knapp assured my wife that I might depend on his best exertions, and I now waited with patience the event. My affectionate partner was unremitting in her attention to me, being never absent but when she had occasion to look into our affairs at home, and, her sister having undertaken the care of our house till my fate was determined, she slept with me every night, as I had reason to fear I should soon be removed to a place where I could not have this indulgence. It was something singular that my poor friend Bromley, whom I had not seen for two months before, was brought into Newgate the very day after myself, being committed on a capital charge of house-breaking. Being however unable to pay the fees required on the master's side, where I was situated, he was obliged to put up with the common side, as it is termed; but the two yards being contiguous, I had an opportunity of seeing him every day.

On Wednesday the 15th of February 1809, I was taken down to the sessions-house for trial; and four persons having been successively tried for capital offences, all of whom were convicted, I was next put to the bar, and stood indicted, "for feloniously stealing,

on the 9th of December, &c. a double-rowed brilliant half-hoop ring, value 16*l.* 16*s.*; a diamond ring for hair, value 9*l.* 9*s.*; a rose diamond and ruby ring, with serpent-chased shank, value 6*l.* 6*s.*; and a pearl and amethyst brooch, value 2*l.* 2*s.* the goods of Matthias Bilger the elder, and Matthias Bilger the younger, privately in their shop." The reader will observe, that I was here indicted upon a certain act of parliament, which makes it a capital offence to steal "goods, wares, or merchandise, to the value of five shillings, privately in a shop." My indictment having been read over, I looked round for Mr Knapp, whom I expected to have found prepared with his brief; but not observing him among the other counsellors, I inquired of the turnkeys near me, who informed me that he was not in court. I then requested of the judge that my trial might be deferred, on account of the absence of my counsel. The court inquiring who was my counsel, I answered, Mr Knapp; upon which Mr Gurney, another counsellor, rising from his seat, said, "My lord, I am authorized to plead for Mr Knapp." This satisfied me, not doubting but Mr Gurney had my brief, and would do all in his power; and I suffered the trial to proceed. The indictment having been read, as I have before described, to my no small surprise, Mr Raine, the counsellor, who had been retained by my prosecutors, rose, and proceeded to state the case to the jury; in doing which, according to custom, he gave so clear a view of the facts attending my offence, and so artfully and eloquently coloured the whole, that I saw the jury had more than half convicted me already, and would only listen to the subsequent evidence as a requisite matter of form. The counsellor concluded his statement with this observation: "If, gentlemen, these facts are clearly proved to you in evidence, (as I persuade myself they will be,) no doubt can remain in your minds as to the verdict you will give." He then

proceeded to examine the witnesses. Mr Bilger, senior, deposed what the reader is already in possession of, with these additions; that, a few minutes after quitting the shop, he missed the articles named in the indictment; and that having, on my second visit, received my final instructions for a ring, and the address I have before mentioned, he went himself the next day to Curzon street, and found No. 13 to be an empty house! Mr Bilger having concluded, and Mr Gurney not offering to cross-examine him, conformable to the suggestions in my brief, and as I fully expected he would, I was extremely surprised, and was soon afterwards convinced that he had not received any brief at all, or had any grounds to plead upon. I therefore requested to ask Mr Bilger a question, namely, "Why he did not apprehend me on the Tuesday night, on which he swears I came the second time to his shop, after having missed the property on the preceding Friday, and suspected me for it?" *Ans.* "My lord, he had so much the appearance of a gentleman that I thought I might be mistaken. He was very differently dressed then from what he is now. He wore whiskers, and an eye-glass, and was very nicely powdered.* My son went to the door in order to get a constable, but he observed an accomplice." (What Mr Bilger meant by this last assertion, or what he would deduce from it, I have no idea.) The next evidence was that of Turner the pawnbroker; and I had in my brief given such hints, that I hoped Mr Knapp would have effectually put this fellow out of countenance, by making him con-

* Subjoined to the report of my trial, in the public prints, was this remark. "The prisoner, on his trial, had left off his false whiskers, his powdered head-dress, and his eye-glass, and appeared in a loose great coat and silk handkerchief!" Indeed there were many similar pieces of wit at my expense, and some compliments paid me on the dexterity with which I exercised my vocation.

fess that he had, at his own request, repeatedly bought such things of me. But here Mr Gurney was still silent, and I saw that it would be useless for me to ask Turner any questions. The working-jeweller was then called to depose to the ring, which he did in the strongest terms. Mr Gurney barely asked him, if he could undertake to swear that he had not made rings exactly similar for other shops? He replied, that he was positive it was one of the three which he sent to Mr Bilger on the 9th of December. Next came the scoundrel who took me, George Donaldson, a constable of St Martin's parish, who stated that himself and Smith, one of the Bow street patrol, from information they had received, apprehended me at the Butchers' Arms in Clare market, in company with a great many notorious thieves. The evidence for the prosecution being now closed, Mr Gurney inquired of Mr Bilger, senior, how many partners he had; who answered none but his son. Then, what other persons were in the shop (meaning assistants) besides his son and himself, when he lost his property?

Ans. "Only a porter, who was cleaning some plate at the further end of the counter, at some distance from where the prisoner stood." All that Mr Gurney therefore said or asked, any other person might have said without reference to a brief; and having put these simple questions, or at least put them in a simple and careless manner, Mr Gurney sat himself down. The last question indeed was of a most important nature, and if properly handled, and enforced with becoming spirit, would, I have little doubt, have rendered me the most essential service. To explain my meaning, I must briefly expound a point of law, with which nine readers out of ten may be unacquainted. The act, under which I was indicted, provides, or is interpreted to mean, that where there are two or more persons employed as shopmen, &c. it is not sufficient for one alone to attend upon the prisoner's

trial; but that every one, if there were a dozen, must personally appear, to swear that he or she did not see or suspect the prisoner to commit the act of robbery; because the law (always favourable to the culprit) presumes, that if one person out of the whole number is absent, that very person might possibly have suspected the prisoner; and then such suspicion, however slight, if confessed, proves that the robbery was not effected so privately as to come within the meaning of the act; consequently, there is an end of the capital part of the charge, and the prisoner can only be transported for seven years. The reader will see, in the next chapter, my reason for being particular in this explanation. The judge now summed up the evidence, and what was most extraordinary, I was not even called on for my defence; so much were the court prejudiced against me, from the eloquent opening of the learned counsel, the clear and decisive evidence of the witnesses; and perhaps (above all) from some little private intimation they had received of my real character and past life. However, as I felt that no defence I could make was likely to prevent my conviction, I was not much concerned on the occasion; and the jury after two minutes' consideration returned the fatal verdict of "Guilty." This verdict was no sooner pronounced, than the villain Donaldson, standing up in the witness-box, said, "My lord, I think it my duty to inform the court what I know of the prisoner at the bar. I have been given to understand that he is a very old offender, and that he has been but a few months returned from Botany Bay!" At this malicious address, there was a general murmur of indignation throughout the whole court; and Mr Gurney (to do him justice) rose with much warmth, saying, "Mr Donaldson, you ought to be ashamed of yourself for having made such a disclosure; you acknowledge you only have this circumstance from hearsay, and had you known

it to be true, after the prisoner being capitally convicted, it is most shameful and unmanly conduct of you to mention it." The malicious rascal was justly confounded at this rebuff, and sneaked away amidst the execrations of the auditors.

After my conviction I was double-ironed, and detained in the dock until the evening, my trial having occupied about two hours ; and at eight o'clock I was escorted to the press yard, and locked up in one of the condemned cells. My poor wife remained in the ward of the prison, to which I belonged, until she saw me pass by, and I had only time to console her in a few words through the bars of the window, and take leave of her until the morning.

CHAPTER XXX.

ACCOUNT OF MY COMPANION AND FELLOW-SUFFERER
IN THE CONDEMNED CELL. HIS UNHAPPY FATE.
I RECEIVE SENTENCE OF DEATH. AM REPRIEVED,
AND SOON AFTERWARDS SENT ON BOARD THE
HULKS. SOME ACCOUNT OF THOSE RECEPTACLES
OF HUMAN MISERY.

BESIDES the four men convicted the same day as myself, there were in the cells several others who had been cast for death the preceding session ; and the recorder's report not having yet been made, they still remained under sentence, ignorant of the fate which awaited them, but they were in expectation of its being decided every succeeding levee-day. It is customary to confine two condemned prisoners in each cell, and I was destined to be the companion of a man named Nicholls, his former bed-fellow having suffered about a

week previous to my conviction. On the turnkeys, who attended me, opening the door of his cell, the unhappy man (Nicholls) was discovered on his knees, with a book in his hand, and evidently a prey to doubt and terror. My conductors apologized for disturbing him, saying they had only brought him a companion, and hoped he would find consolation in my society. Poor Nicholls answered in broken accents, "My God! I was a little alarmed—I heard the keys coming—I thought it was the report. What! do you expect it to-night?" The turnkeys replied that, from the lateness of the hour, it was not probable; but begged him to compose himself, and hope for the best. They then re-locked the doors, and left us. This unfortunate person had been convicted of selling forged bank-notes, through the treachery of a man, who, to save himself, had given information, and betrayed him by a signal to the police-officers, at the moment of the negotiation taking place. As he was known to have carried on this illegal and dangerous traffic to a great extent, in the town of Birmingham, where he resided, the Bank were determined to make an example of him; particularly as he had obstinately refused to save his own life by disclosing, as he could have done, most important information on the subject, so as to lead to the detection of the fabricators. This being the case of Nicholls, he had no hope of mercy being extended to him; and was consequently in hourly dread of the awful fiat which was to seal his doom, and consign him to a shameful and premature death. On being left alone with him, I forgot for a moment my own situation, and feeling for that of my ill-fated companion, whose case I already knew, I exerted myself to console and soothe him; not by raising in him hopes for which I knew there was no foundation, but by exhorting him to look forward to "another and a better world;" to comfort himself with the reflection, that his crime (though punished with death on account of its inju-

rious tendency in a commercial country) was not in a moral sense, or in the eye of God, of so black a nature as to preclude him from the hope of mercy at that awful tribunal "before which the judges of this world must themselves be tried." By these and the like suggestions, I so far succeeded as to compose him pretty much; and having undressed ourselves, we went to bed. He then requested me to read a few chapters to him, and earnestly asked my opinion on some particular passages in the New Testament, which applied to his situation, and of the real meaning of which he anxiously wished to be resolved. We had read and reasoned on these topics until St Paul's clock struck ten, and were on the point of composing ourselves to sleep, that "balm of hurt minds," when we were alarmed by the rattling of keys, and the sound of voices. I endeavoured to calm the agitation of Mr Nicholls, by supposing that another unhappy man had been convicted, and was about to be introduced to the cells; but he declared it must be the report, and fell on his knees before the cell door. The footsteps approaching, our door was slowly unlocked, and the distressing agony of my companion was now indescribable. Mr Newman, the jailor, entered as quietly as possible, and taking Nicholls by the hand, while he himself was evidently affected, he said, "Mr Nicholls, —the report has been made, and—(here he would fain have paused)—I am sorry to inform you it has been unfavourable."

Nicholls. "Lord, have mercy on me! God's will be done! I expected it, Mr Newman—it is no more than I expected. When is it—to suffer, Mr Newman?"

The latter replied, "On Wednesday next."

Nicholls. "I could have wished, Mr Newman, for a little longer time—I'm not prepared to die—I have some worldly affairs to settle—but—God help me!—I hope for more mercy from him than the gentlemen of the Bank have shewn me."

Mr Newman then assuring him of every attention in his power, commended him to my care, and took a tender leave of us both, promising to see Nicholls again in the morning. The reader will easily perceive I had not the prospect of a very agreeable night before me; my own situation was deplorable enough, but the distress of my unfortunate bed-fellow overpowered every other consideration but that of pity and grief for him. I had now my task to go through again, and to enforce all I repeated with greater energy and stronger assurances. At length, exhausted by contending passions, poor Nicholls fell asleep, and I had then recourse to my philosophy for self-consolation.

The next day, Mr Newman requested, as a favour, that I would continue to bear the unfortunate Nicholls company during the week he had to live, and in this request the latter also joined; so that I could not, without inhumanity, refuse to comply, and in this melancholy interval I omitted no opportunity of contributing to his comfort. The night before his execution I also, by his own desire, sat up with him: a very worthy and devout man of his acquaintance, accompanied by two other friends, also attended him; and the greater part of the night was passed in reading, exhortation, and singing hymns. Poor Nicholls was, however, in a very low and desponding state, and evidently dreaded the approach of death. About three o'clock he was advised to lie down, and sunk into a slumber from which he did not wake till summoned by the keeper, about six, to descend to the press-yard, the sheriffs, &c. being shortly expected. I now took a solemn farewell of him, and was removed to another cell. At eight o'clock the doleful sound of the tolling bell announced the awful ceremony, and he was a few minutes afterwards launched into eternity; a woman named Margaret Barrington, for forging and uttering a seaman's will, suffering with him. The fate of this unhappy man, who was of a most inoffensive and gentle dispo-

sition, and left a numerous family to bewail his loss, affected me much.

I had now a new companion assigned me, a young man about my own age, who was convicted the day after myself, under what is called "Lord Ellenborough's Act." His crime was shooting at a person who had attempted to apprehend him in the act of robbery; but his pistol flashed in the pan, and no injury whatever had taken place. However, the nature of the offence excluded him also from any hopes of mercy, so that I had the fortune to be placed in a second unpleasant situation, and probably for a number of weeks. As to myself, I had no reason to doubt of being reprieved, very few persons suffering death at that time of day, except for most heinous crimes, or robbery attended with acts of violence. This young man, 'tis true, was a much more tolerable companion than his predecessor; he was always chearful and easy; declaring (although he expected to suffer) that, as he had never seriously injured man, woman, or child, he was not afraid to die, but rather happy at the prospect of being released from a troublesome world. He had formerly been transported, but made his escape from the hulks; and the miseries he had witnessed and endured on board those horrid receptacles, he asserted to be such that he preferred death to a reprieve, which might subject him to years of similar suffering.

About eight days after my conviction, I was surprised at being summoned to the main gate of the prison, to attend a gentleman who inquired for me. This person proved to be an attorney named Humphries, who, addressing me, stated that he called by desire of counsellor Knapp, to inform me that he (Mr Knapp) was sorry he had not been present at my trial, and that he had discovered a point of law, of which he hoped to avail himself so far as to obtain a revocation of my sentence; that he intended to submit this point to the judge who tried me, and had instructed him

(Mr Humphries) to prepare a petition for the purpose, as it was Mr Knapp's opinion that I ought not to have been capitally convicted; but that nothing could be done till after the close of the session, and I must receive the sentence of death as a matter of form; adding, that I might make myself perfectly easy, as there was no danger of my suffering. I now inquired of Mr Humphries, of what nature was the point or objection in question; but this limb of the law, assuming an air of importance, answered that it would be useless to explain it to me, as, if he did, I should not comprehend it! I was, however, convinced it related to the absence of the porter who was present in Bilger's shop, and who ought to have attended my trial, for the reasons assigned in the preceding chapter. I therefore smiled at the mean opinion he entertained of my understanding, but replied, that it was very well; I should depend on Mr Knapp and on his (Mr Humphries') good offices: and here ended our interview. For brevity's sake, I shall inform the reader at once, that I never derived any benefit from the intimation conveyed to me by Humphries, although I several times wrote both to him and Mr Knapp. But I rather think it was a trick of the former (who is a designing artful pettifogger) with a view to extort money from me, on pretence of drawing up petitions or other documents in my behalf. I had, however, seen too much of the world to be the dupe of an Old Bailey solicitor. Two or three days after this event, the session being concluded, the whole of the prisoners convicted during their progress were as usual taken down to the court to receive sentence. Myself and the other five men, together with two women, were first put to the bar. When asked, in my turn, what I had to say, "why judgment of death should not pass upon me?" I answered, that my counsel, Mr Knapp, having intimated that he had discovered a legal objection to my conviction, I humbly hoped his lordship

would be pleased to respite the judgment. The recorder replied, "Prisoner, your request cannot be complied with: if your counsel had anything to offer in arrest of judgment, he should have done so previous to the close of the session. I must, therefore, pass sentence upon you." In this observation, I knew the recorder to be perfectly right; and though I was induced to make the trial, I had no hopes of gaining anything by my motion; and I was now more fully convinced that either Mr Knapp, or Mr Humphries, or both, had deceived me, and that I had been altogether very shamefully neglected. His lordship then proceeded to pass the awful sentence in the usual form, which he prefaced with a very pathetic and impressive address, that drew tears from the surrounding auditors. The other prisoners were then put to the bar in rotation, and variously sentenced; and among those transported for seven years was poor Bromley, who, though capitally indicted, had the good fortune to be convicted of simple felony only. Thus we were both a second time convicted the same session, as if his fate was involved in mine. He was, a few weeks afterwards, sent on board the same hulk at Portsmouth in which he had before served seven years; and as he never came to this colony, he will (if he survives) in a few months be discharged, and once more return to the scene of our former exploits. I sincerely hope that his past sufferings will, however, warn him to avoid a continuance of his guilty courses, and to amend his life.

The recorder's report to the king being, on some accounts delayed, I continued eleven weeks in the cells, in which time the number of condemned persons had increased to eighteen! At length, the report was made. About eight o'clock on Friday night, the 3d of May, Mr Newman entered the press-yard; and, as myself and companion listened with palpitating hearts to their approach, we heard one of the turn-

keys utter the words "Cook and Lowe." I confess that, at the moment, I was under considerable alarm; which the reader will allow to be natural, when he considers that my fate was still doubtful, and that my life or death depended on a single word from the keeper, who came to announce it. Hearing our two names particularly mentioned, as he advanced towards our cell, was also a circumstance calculated to increase our mutual terror. At length the door was unlocked; and by this I knew that one of us, at least, was doomed to suffer, because they always visit first those who are ordered for execution. Mr Newman entering with a grave countenance, addressed poor Cook in nearly the same terms he had done Nicholls on a former occasion; then turning to me, he said, "Lowe is respited." My unhappy companion received the melancholy news, as he had always declared he should, with a cheerful aspect, nor appeared in the least dismayed. The jailer having withdrawn, Cook, after an inward struggle, assured me he felt perfectly reconciled; and, after I had read to and consoled him for a short time, retired to bed, and slept apparently with more composure than usual. The next morning myself and the four others who had been reprieved (poor Cook being the only one to suffer) were, as usual, ordered to return to our respective wards; but Cook begged so earnestly that I would not quit him till the fatal day, that I could not avoid complying. In this period his courage and resignation never once failed him. The same worthy man who had attended Nicholls passed the last night with him, and I felt a melancholy pleasure in bearing them company. Cook, however, was so cheerful and well prepared, that he slept profoundly the greatest part of the night, and, on being awaked at the usual hour, appeared equally serene and happy. I obtained leave to descend with him to the press-yard, where he washed himself, brushed his coat, and seemed pleased at his approaching

release (as he termed it.) I then, at his earnest request, accompanied him to the chapel, where he received the sacrament, of which I partook. Some breakfast having been prepared for him, he ate and drank with every appearance of a good appetite; after which, his irons being knocked off, and the hour approaching, I took an affectionate farewell of the poor fellow, who declared to me at parting, that he should go out with as much pleasure as if he was going to a fair or a race, and that he had rather die than live. I then left him, and repaired to my own ward, through the windows of which I saw him pass by to execution; and he really appeared to verify the promise he had made me; nodding, as he passed, to his fellow-prisoners, and having as fine a colour in his cheeks as ever I saw a man. I was informed that he preserved this disposition to the last moment, and died regretted by all who witnessed his deportment. As I now knew the consequence of my being respited, namely, that I was to be transported for life, I became anxious to leave England by the first ship for this colony, as I was not in circumstances to subsist for any length of time in a prison; and I wished, if possible, to avoid going to the hulks, as I had been fortunate enough to do on my first transportation. My wife, also, who had paid me the most dutiful attention since my confinement, was earnestly desirous to accompany me in my exile; and, with that view, she waited on a gentleman to whom I referred her, soliciting his interest to obtain that favour; but, although he used every effort, the application was refused, she having no family, and the secretary of state having set his face against such an indulgence, on account of the bad reports received of those women who had already been suffered to go out free with their husbands. I was equally unsuccessful in my application to be sent out by the ship *Anne*, which was on the point of sailing. At length my wife received a private intimation that I

should be removed to the hulks the next morning ; in consequence of which, my mother and sisters, whom I immediately summoned, came to take leave of me. I had only acquainted them with my misfortune since my being respited, and they were of course equally astonished and grieved at the news. My wife remained with me that night, and at four o'clock in the morning, myself and eleven others were conveyed by water on board the Retribution hulk at Woolwich.

I had now a new scene of misery to contemplate ; and, of all the shocking scenes I had ever beheld, this was the most distressing. There were confined in this floating dungeon nearly six hundred men, most of them double-ironed ; and the reader may conceive the horrible effects arising from the continual rattling of chains, the filth and vermin naturally produced by such a crowd of miserable inhabitants, the oaths and execrations constantly heard among them ; and above all, from the shocking necessity of associating and communicating more or less with so depraved a set of beings. On arriving on board, we were all immediately stripped, and washed in large tubs of water, then, after putting on each a suit of coarse slop clothing, we were ironed, and sent below ; our own clothes being taken from us, and detained till we could sell or otherwise dispose of them, as no person is exempted from the obligation to wear the ship-dress. On descending the hatch-way, no conception can be formed of the scene which presented itself. I shall not attempt to describe it ; but nothing short of a descent to the infernal regions can be at all worthy of a comparison with it. I soon met with many of my old Botany Bay acquaintances, who were all eager to offer me their friendship and services ; that is, with a view to rob me of what little I had ; for in this place there is no other motive or subject for ingenuity. All former friendships or connexions are dissolved, and a man here will rob his best benefactor, or even mess-

mate, of an article worth one halfpenny. Every morning, at seven o'clock, all the convicts capable of work, or, in fact, all who are capable of getting into the boats, are taken ashore to the Warren, in which the royal arsenal and other public buildings are situated, and are there employed at various kinds of labour, some of them very fatiguing; and while so employed, each gang of sixteen or twenty men, is watched and directed by a fellow called a guard. These guards are most commonly of the lowest class of human beings; wretches devoid of all feeling; ignorant in the extreme, brutal by nature, and rendered tyrannical and cruel by the consciousness of the power they possess; no others, but such as I have described, would hold the situation, their wages being not more than a day-labourer would earn in London. They invariably carry a large and ponderous stick, with which, without the smallest provocation, they will fell an unfortunate convict to the ground, and frequently repeat their blows long after the poor sufferer is insensible. At noon the working party return on board to dinner, and at one again go on shore, where they labour till near sun-set. On returning on board in the evening, all hands are mustered by a roll, and the whole being turned down below, the hatches are put over them, and secured for the night. As to the food, the stipulated ration is very scanty, but of even part of that they are defrauded. Their provisions being supplied by contractors, and not by government, are of the worst kind, such as would not be considered eatable or wholesome elsewhere; and both the weight and measure are always deficient. The allowance of bread is said to be about twenty ounces per day. Three days in the week they have about four ounces of cheese for dinner, and the other four days a pound of beef. The breakfast is invariably boiled barley, of the coarsest kind imaginable; and of this the pigs of the hulk come in for a third part, because it is so nau-

seous that nothing but downright hunger will enable a man to eat it. For supper, they have, on banyan days, burgoo, of as good a quality as the barley, and which is similarly disposed of; and on meat days, the water in which the beef was boiled is thickened with barley, and forms a mess called "smiggins," of a more detestable nature than either of the two former! The reader may conceive that I do not exaggerate, when I state, that among the convicts the common price of these several eatables, is—for a day's allowance of beef, one halfpenny;—ditto, of cheese, one halfpenny; ditto, of bread, three-halfpence; but the cheese is most commonly so bad, that they throw it away. It is manufactured, I believe, of skimmed milk for this particular contract. The beef generally consists of old bulls, or cows which have died of age or famine; the least trace of fat is considered a phenomenon, and it is far inferior upon the whole to good horse-flesh. I once saw the prisoners throw the whole day's supply overboard the moment it was hoisted out of the boat, and for this offence they were severely flogged. The friends of these unhappy persons are not allowed to come on board, but must remain alongside during their visit; the prisoners are, it is true, suffered to go into their boat, but a guard is placed within hearing of their conversation, and if a friend or parent has come one hundred miles, they are not allowed above ten minutes' interview; so that instead of consolation, the visit only excites regret at the parties being so suddenly torn asunder. All letters, too, written by prisoners, must be delivered unsealed to the chief mate for his inspection, before they are sent ashore; and such as he thinks obnoxious, are of course suppressed. In like manner, all letters received from the post-office are opened and scrutinized. If I were to attempt a full description of the miseries endured in these ships, I could fill a volume; but I shall sum up all by stating, that besides robbery from each other, which is as

common as cursing and swearing, I witnessed among the prisoners themselves, during the twelvemonth I remained with them, one deliberate murder, for which the perpetrator was executed at Maidstone, and one suicide; and that unnatural crimes are openly committed.

CHAPTER XXXI.

I EMBARK A SECOND TIME FOR NEW SOUTH WALES. INDULGENTLY TREATED BY THE CAPTAIN. MY EMPLOYMENT DURING THE VOYAGE. ARRIVE AT PORT JACKSON AFTER AN ABSENCE OF FOUR YEARS. MY RECEPTION FROM GOVERNOR MACQUARRIE. ASSIGNED BY LOT TO A SETTLER. HIS BRUTAL TREATMENT OF ME. I FIND MEANS TO QUIT HIS SERVICE, AND RETURN TO SYDNEY.

FROM the description I have briefly given of the hulks, the reader will easily believe I ardently longed for the moment which was to release me from so miserable an existence. That happy day at length arrived. On the 15th of June 1810, I was removed from the Retribution, in company with fifty-four others, to Longreach, a few miles below Woolwich, where we were put on board the Indian, which ship had recently been fitted at Deptford for the reception of two hundred prisoners. The next day we sailed for Gravesend, and at this place I anxiously hoped for a farewell visit from my wife, to whom I had written from Woolwich on the morning of my embarkation, acquainting her with my approaching departure. She had attended me at least once a month, during my stay at Woolwich, and supported me as well as her circumstances

would permit. We remained at Gravesend three days, but she did not appear; and in our progress from thence to Spithead, we took on board at the Nore forty-five more convicts from the Zealand hulk at Sheerness. In a few days we arrived at Spithead, where we received one hundred prisoners from the hulks at Portsmouth, and Langston harbour; soon after which I had a letter from my wife, stating that she had arrived at Gravesend on the evening of the day our ship departed, and brought with her a supply of the most necessary articles for my comfort; that on finding, to her grief, that she was too late, she had been advised to follow the ship to Sheerness; which she in fact did, and arrived at that place on the very day after we had taken in the prisoners, and immediately proceeded on our voyage, without even coming to an anchor. Thus she was again fatally disappointed; and having incurred this expense, and endured much fatigue, she had been obliged to return to town; but added, that if possible, she would see me before we sailed from Portsmouth. This, however, she was not enabled to accomplish, her health and circumstances being both unfavourable to the undertaking. But I received, on the 18th of July, when we were quite ready for, and in hourly expectation of sailing, a letter from her, in which she expressed her concern at not being in a condition to visit me; but gave me advice that she had packed up some clothes and other necessities, of which she enclosed a list; and that the trunk containing them would arrive by the Gosport coach at a certain time and place. I had not received this letter from the hands of our captain above half an hour, when the *Lion* of 64 made the signal to weigh; and from that moment no boat was permitted to leave the ship, so that I went to sea without the smallest comfort for the voyage, or any wearing apparel except the suit of slops I had on. We accordingly got under weigh immediately, and sailed in company with the

Lion and the Chichester store-ship. The former had on board the Persian ambassador and suite, and was bound for Bombay; the latter was destined for St Helena; and we were to accompany them (under convoy) as far as the latitude of the Cape of Good Hope. We were no sooner at sea, than captain Barclay, who had been induced to notice me from the recommendation of a female passenger who was going out to New South Wales, and who (singular to relate) had actually come home with me in H. M. ship *Buffalo*; the captain, I say, from her representation of my abilities, and from an application I made to him by letter, treated me with peculiar kindness. I was released from irons, and appointed to assist the steward in the issue of provisions, &c. both to the prisoners, the ship's company, and the troops. As the steward himself was not very expert, and an indifferent scholar, I had the chief management of the whole business, and the arrangement of all the victualling accounts. From the experience I had formerly gained, I was perfectly at home in this situation, and gave satisfaction to all parties. I also wrote the ship's log-book, and executed many services with my pen for captain Barclay himself. The effects of this favourable distinction and confidence were, that I had every personal comfort the ship afforded during our passage, lived tolerably well, and accumulated a decent change of clothing to equip myself on our arrival at Port Jackson. Nothing but the usual routine of occurrences befell us in this voyage. We touched first at Madeira, and afterwards at Rio de Janeiro, but our stay at both places was short. The day after we quitted the latter, in company with our commodore and the store ship, both these vessels so far out-sailed us, that we lost sight of them and separated, continuing our course alone without interruption, and with tolerable expedition, to the end of our voyage. On the 16th of December, we anchored in Sydney cove, from which place I had been absent nearly four years.

I soon learnt that the news of my second transportation, and in fact of my principal adventures in London, had preceded my own arrival; and that, consequently, no surprise was excited by my re-appearance. I also heard, to my mortification, that from the changes which had taken place in public affairs since my departure from the colony, most of the departments were filled by strangers, from whom I could expect no indulgence; and that not only these officers, but the governor himself, had conceived a violent prejudice against those unfortunate and misguided persons who, by a renewal of their vicious courses on returning to their native country, subject themselves to a second disgraceful banishment, and seem thereby to indicate that they are incapable of reformation, and systematically depraved. From this information I had reason to expect a cool reception; whereas, during my former residence in the colony, I witnessed many instances of persons who returned under the sentence of the law being most cordially received, and preferred to any vacant appointment much sooner than a stranger. On the 24th of December I was landed with the rest of the prisoners, and the whole of us were drawn up in the jail-yard for the governor's inspection. It seems, I had been particularly pointed out to his excellency; for on approaching me, he asked me several questions respecting my employment under governor King, and concluded with desiring Mr Nicholls, the superintendant, to dispose of me at present to Hawkesbury. His excellency however paused a few moments before his coming to this decision, and I was in hopes he had an idea of giving me a clerical employment. The governor then added, that if I behaved well, something might in time be done for me, or to that effect. I was much disappointed on this occasion, as I too well knew the hardships I should have to encounter if sent up the country and assigned to a settler. However, it was

in vain to murmur, and about fifty of us were immediately conveyed by water to Parramatta, from whence we walked next day to Hawkesbury. On arriving at the town of Windsor, the settlers having been summoned by the magistrates, and there being a greater number of applicants for men servants than there were prisoners to dispose of, our names were written on tickets, and intermixed with a sufficient number of blanks, (we being the prizes at the disposal of Dame Fortune,) and then each settler in turn drew a ticket, which on being opened, published the good or ill luck of the drawer. It was my fate to be drawn by a settler called Big Ben, and with him I quitted the scene of action, and prepared to remove my little baggage to the farm of my new master. As I had been intimately acquainted with this man, and in fact with every inhabitant of Hawkesbury, when I formerly officiated as clerk to Mr Baker, the store-keeper, I flattered myself that he would treat me with more kindness, or at least with less severity, than a total stranger; and every one who recollected me declared I had been fortunate in getting such a master; and that Ben, on the other hand, could not have drawn a man more eminently qualified to render him essential service; as, although his agricultural and commercial speculations were both extensive, he was himself perfectly illiterate, and obliged to hire a free man to attend him at stated times, and arrange his books. But I soon found, to my sorrow, that I had little reason for self-congratulation. 'Tis true, this ignorant and good-for-nothing fellow was glad to avail himself of my talents, and thereby save the expense he had before incurred; but he thought it too much to support me in a ration of provisions in return for my services, though I should have been satisfied therewith. His avarice was such, that he expected me to act in the double capacity of his clerk and labourer; and he accordingly measured

out the prescribed portion of ground which he required me to break up with the hoe, well knowing I had not been accustomed to hard labour, and that I was in fact incapable of the task. My remonstrances produced the most unfeeling replies on his part, accompanied with threats of getting me flogged, and every other species of tyrannical persecution. This wretch, though now possessed of thousands, was a few years ago one of the poorest objects in the colony, and as defective in bodily as in mental endowments; nor was his present opulence so much the effect of laudable industry, as of a natural low cunning he possessed, which qualified him to take advantage of floods, temporary scarcities, and other casual events; and, becoming an adept in the arts of monopoly and extortion, he by degrees attained the rank of a first-rate settler, and, in the opinion of his dependants, but much more so in his own, is a man of consequence. His late prosperity has rendered him overbearing and cruel to his inferiors (I mean in fortune) while he is meanly servile to his superiors. In fact, the old proverb "Set a beggar on horseback," &c. was never more aptly applied than to Big Ben. According to the lately established custom, I had been assigned to this brute, by indenture, for three years; but the misery of my situation daily increasing, I determined to try every method of obtaining my deliverance from his power. After struggling with many hardships for about five weeks, during which I was generally employed at some laborious work in the field, or in drudgery about the house, from morning till evening, and sleeping in a barn over-run with vermin at night, I at length found means, through the friendly aid of an acquaintance, to escape from the hands of my persecutor, though much against his will; and the reader may judge of the malignity of his disposition by the following circumstance. I must premise, that I could get away by no other means than counterfeit-

ing sickness; in consequence of which I was ordered (by the humanity of the resident surgeon) to the general hospital at Sydney. It would appear that Benn* suspected this stratagem, for, after trying all he could to obstruct my success, he used these remarkable words at parting: "Aye, you may go;—but if you are six months in the hospital, I'll have you again when you come out. I know you're of no use to me, but I'll keep you, if it's only to torment you." However, as his avarice would not allow him to send a fortnight's ration with me to the hospital, (in which case he might have reclaimed me had I been then discharged,) I knew myself to be effectually free from his further persecution; and I had soon afterwards the pleasure to hear that he had applied for, and obtained, another man in my room. Indeed, so great was my aversion to this unfeeling monster, that I was determined to endure corporal or other punishment rather than have returned to him: but, surely, the threat he used on my leaving him, ought, when made known, to have precluded him from ever having it in his power to realize so hellish an idea!

* His real name was John Benn.

CHAPTER XXXII.

APPOINTED AN OVERSEER. DETERMINE TO REFORM MY LIFE, AND BECOME A NEW MAN. ALL MY GOOD INTENTIONS RENDERED UNAVAILING BY AN UNFORESEEN AND UNAVOIDABLE MISFORTUNE. I BECOME A VICTIM TO PREJUDICE AND THE DEPRAVITY OF A YOUTH IN YEARS BUT A VETERAN IN INIQUITY. I AM BANISHED TO THE COAL RIVER.

AFTER a month's confinement in the hospital I was discharged, and transferred to the town-gang, in which however I laboured but a few weeks; for a deputy-overseer of the jail-gang being wanted, Mr Nicholls, the superintendent, requested me to undertake the office, which, he observed, would be an introduction to something better, if I behaved with propriety. I therefore gladly accepted the offer, although neither the situation was lucrative, nor its duties agreeable. I had, on landing from the Indian, made a firm and solemn resolution never again to deviate from the strictest probity, or to subject myself any more to a repetition of those sufferings which are the inevitable consequence of irregular conduct. Knowing, by fatal experience, the value of a good or even an easy employment, I determined, if I should ever again obtain an eligible situation, to take proper care of it; and, I as solemnly declare, notwithstanding my present condition, and the punishment I have since endured, that I have uniformly adhered to those resolutions; nor does my conscience upbraid me with one single act at which I ought to blush, since my arrival in the colony

But the subject of the present chapter will prove that the best intentions of mankind are sometimes thwarted and rendered abortive; and that a person who is destined to be unfortunate, will be so, *maugre* every exertion, and let him be never so circumspect.

Soon after my return to Sydney, I met with a youth named Edwards, who had been my messmate and bed-fellow on board the Indian, and for whom I had conceived a particular regard. He informed me that he lived as servant in the family of Mr Bent, the judge-advocate, where he had an excellent place, and invited me to call and see him; as I had rendered him many acts of service on the voyage, he now wished (he said) having it in his power, to shew his gratitude for my kindness. Accordingly, I called upon him twice, and saw him in his master's kitchen (which was detached from the dwelling house) in the presence of several other servants. I told him I lived in the house of Mr Colles, in Philip street, and should be happy to see him when his leisure would permit. He soon afterwards visited me, and treated me with some rum, Colles being a publican. Observing him to have a considerable sum of money about him, for a youth in his situation, and knowing him to have been utterly destitute on his landing, I expressed my surprise, and earnestly cautioned him against any acts of dishonesty which might endanger his losing so good a place, and must, I assured him, inevitably bring him to disgrace and ruin. He positively declared that he had done no wrong; but that his mistress, who was very partial to him, frequently gave him a small sum for pocket-money, and that the gentry who visited at his master's made him numerous and handsome presents. I knew all this to be possible, and I was the more inclined to believe him, because (as he himself rightly observed) he had no occasion to use deceit with me, in whom he might safely have reposed the fullest confidence. I however repeated my cautions and advice, and we soon

afterwards parted. A few days having elapsed, he paid me a second visit, and proposed that we should take a walk together, which we accordingly did; and having taken some refreshment, and amused ourselves for a couple of hours, he quitted me and returned home. I saw no more of Edwards for about a week; when one day, as I sat at dinner with Mr Colles and his family, he came in rather abruptly, and requested to speak with me. I rose from the table, and taking him into an adjoining room, he there took from his pocket several colonial bills, and begged I would take care of them for an hour or two, as something had occurred at his master's house, and he did not wish it to be known that he possessed so much money. He also delivered his watch into my care, and taking off one of his shoes, produced from it another paper, which he told me, in rather a significant manner, his mistress had that morning given him. I saw something so mysterious in this conduct, and my former doubts were so far revived, that I hesitated, and begged earnestly that he would not deceive me, but confess if he had done anything wrong; adding, that if I was fully apprised of the case, I should be the better enabled to render him this service, and to conceal the money more effectually, without risking my own safety. This, indeed, I only said with a view to come at the truth; for, had he confessed to me what I suspected, though I certainly should not have betrayed him, I was so firmly resolved to avoid all improper connections, that I should have declined taking charge of the money, and from that moment have dropped all intercourse with him. He, however, so vehemently protested his innocence, and urged me to oblige him, repeating that he could have no motive for deceiving me, that I suffered him to depart, which he did as abruptly as he had entered. In fact, the whole transaction did not occupy above five minutes, and was so sudden and unexpected that I had no time for reflection.

tion, and scarce knew what I did. On his departure I put the papers carelessly in my waistcoat-pocket, and the watch in my fob, from which the riband hung conspicuous. As to the latter article, I knew it to be his own property, having seen him wear it publicly for several weeks. I now rejoined the family, and sat down to finish my dinner. The cloth being drawn, I communicated the particulars of my interview with Edwards to my friend Colles, of whose experience and integrity I had the highest opinion. I produced the papers Edwards had given me, declaring that I felt uneasy on the occasion, and wished him (Mr Colles) to advise me how I should act. On looking over the papers, we found about 5*l.* 10*s.* in small colonial bills, and the papers which Edwards took from his shoe, proved to be a store-receipt for 8*l.* 15*s.* ! Colles expressed his concern that I had suffered Edwards to leave them at all, saying that he saw clearly through the whole business ; and earnestly advised me, for my own security, to go immediately to the judge-advocate's ; and, let who would be present, to return the whole to Edwards in the most public manner, with a declaration that I would have nothing to do with them. This friendly advice I so far approved, that I determined to follow it implicitly ; but, unfortunately for me, I proposed to smoke half a pipe first, and declared I would then immediately go. I had just lighted my pipe, and taken a seat near the door, which was open, when I heard somebody approach, and turning my head, saw two constables at the gate, who directly entered the house, and one of them addressing me, said, he came with an order to search my box. I of course felt a little confused, but conscious of my innocence, I boldly answered that my box was at hand, and they were welcome to search it ; but requested to know what they were seeking for, adding, that if I knew, I perhaps might save them that trouble. One of them replied, " It is something about the judge-

advocate's servant." I now instantly perceived that I had but one part to act for my own preservation, and in which I considered myself justified by the palpable deceit Edwards had used towards me. I therefore said, that the young man they mentioned had just been with me, and left some property in my care, which I would deliver up to them; and accordingly produced the bills and the watch. Immediately on seeing the store-receipt, they exclaimed, "That is what we wanted." They declared that I had acted perfectly right in giving up the property; but desired I would accompany them to Mr Redman, the chief constable; and assured me that my open conduct would undoubtedly acquit me of any blame in the transaction. I willingly attended them, and learnt by the way, that Edwards was lodged in jail, on suspicion of robbing his master. On arriving at Mr Redman's, the latter being informed of what had passed, desired I would wait in his house until he had reported the whole to Mr Bent, and received that gentleman's further commands. In half an hour Mr Redman returned, and informed me that Mr Bent fully approved of my conduct, and I was at liberty to depart, and if again wanted, I should be sent for. My friend Colles expressed his approbation also of the step I had taken; but was sorry I had not anticipated the constables, by going myself to the judge's house the moment he had so advised me; and for that omission I certainly was highly blameable, and have since severely suffered. The transaction above described took place on a Friday, and I heard no more on the subject till the following Monday, when going to the jail at two o'clock to take out the working party, I was met at the jail door by Mr Redman, who informed me he was ordered by the governor to confine me in a cell. I was of course thunderstruck at this intimation; but as the order was peremptory, I submitted, and was immediately locked up, after sending notice of my

situation to Mr Colles. I remained in close confinement during the whole week, in the course of which I learnt that Edwards, who was lodged in another cell, had undergone a private examination before his master on the preceding Saturday, and it was supposed he had (God knows falsely) implicated me as an accomplice in his guilt. The ensuing Saturday, I was taken before a bench of magistrates, where I also met Edwards, but had no communication with him. The latter was then called for, and now appeared in the court, to my surprise, as an approver, or evidence, against a woman known by the name of Peggy the Miller, from her former husband having been of that profession. This woman had, unknown to me, been also confined the whole week on Edwards's accusation. I remained among the crowd at the door of the court-house, where I was enabled to hear the proceedings I am now going to describe. Edwards deposed that the said Margaret had lately quitted the service of Mr Bent, but had lived some time in the family as his fellow-servant. That soon after deponent's coming to the house, she one day proposed to him to take some money from his master's writing desk, and offered to procure him the keys for that purpose; that he accordingly did so, and divided the spoil (about 5*l*) with her. Being desired to proceed, he continued, "A few days afterwards, she again proposed to me to take some more money, and I took about the same sum as before." These depositions being committed to writing by the court, and being extracted with some difficulty from the witness, and attended with many questions and remarks from the magistrates present*, of course occupied some time, and, on the court desiring Edwards to go on, he was about to proceed in the same words, "A few days after," &c. but the court, I suppose, conceiving him

* The judge-advocate himself did not attend.

capable of saying anything in order to save himself, and, as he could neither particularise any of the money or bills said to be so taken, trace their disposal, or produce one single circumstance to corroborate his assertions, they declined hearing any more, and put the woman on her defence; who stated generally, that every syllable of Edwards's evidence was false and malicious; that during her residence in the family, she had such frequent opportunities of observing the conduct of Edwards, and so much reason to believe he was in the constant habit of pilfering, that out of regard to her own safety, being a free woman, and to prevent her being unjustly suspected, she one day requested her mistress to discharge her, and on being questioned as to her motives for such a wish, and pressed to continue in her place, she evaded a full explanation, but consented to continue on condition of Mrs Bent herself keeping the keys of the various drawers, &c. and not suffering them to lie about as they had hitherto done. That she had reason to believe this conversation had come to the knowledge of Edwards; for the latter soon afterwards grossly abused her, and threatened to stab her with a knife, if ever he found that she told any tales of him, or pryed into his proceedings. That supposing her mistress, from this circumstance, to be too much prepossessed in his favour, and fearing the consequences of Edwards's wicked disposition, she had accordingly persisted in requesting, and finally obtained her discharge; since which she had married an industrious mechanic, and lived in good repute. The court was now cleared, and, after some deliberation, re-opened, when the bench informed her, that the evidence of Edwards being unsupported by any other testimony, the court were of opinion that the charge had not been substantiated, and she was therefore discharged from custody. During the preceding examination, Edwards had never once mentioned my name, but accused this

woman as his sole accomplice ; and every person present, as well as myself, concluded I should be immediately liberated ; but the woman had no sooner retired, than I was called to the bar, and stood charged, together with Edwards, "with breaking open the writing-desk of Ellis Bent, esquire, and stealing thereout several sums of money!" To this charge, Edwards, who appeared no longer capable of dissimulation, pleaded "Guilty." I of course solemnly denied any knowledge of, or participation in his guilt ; and briefly stated the part I had acted, calling upon Mr Colles, Mr Redman, and the two constables, to corroborate my account, which they did in every particular I have before recited. The court then appearing to hesitate, Mr Cubitt, the gaoler, with an over-officious zeal to shew himself assiduous, produced a written paper, which he stated to be the declaration or confession of Edwards, when taken before the judge, his late master, on the day after his apprehension ; adding, that the court might perhaps wish to hear it. To this the members assenting, one of them accordingly read to the following effect ; "That Edwards confessed having repeatedly robbed his master's desk of money, in which practice he had been solely aided, abetted, and encouraged by Vaux ! That Vaux had contrived an instrument in order to pick the lock of the writing-desk ; and that on one occasion, Vaux happening to come without his instrument, had made use of a fork, one prong of which he bent for the purpose ! That another time he had made use of a large nail ! and that the nail now produced, which had been found on Mr Bent's premises, was the identical nail so used ! [This nail Cubitt exhibited to the court ; it was a common nail with a brass head, about four inches long, and the point appeared to have been turned by driving it in a stone or brick wall.] That Edwards and Vaux had jointly taken by these means, at various times, about sixty pounds, which had been

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